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The American Conservative

WHAT ISRAEL LOST

John J. Mearsheimer • Avi Shlaim • Daniel Levy • Tom Streithorst • Glenn Greenwald



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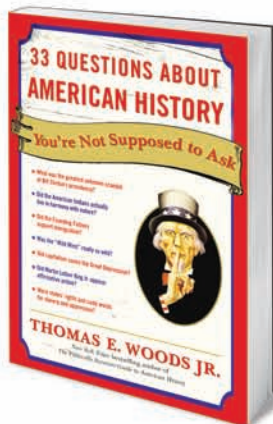
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[INCOMING]

DON'T FORGET THE OBAMACONS

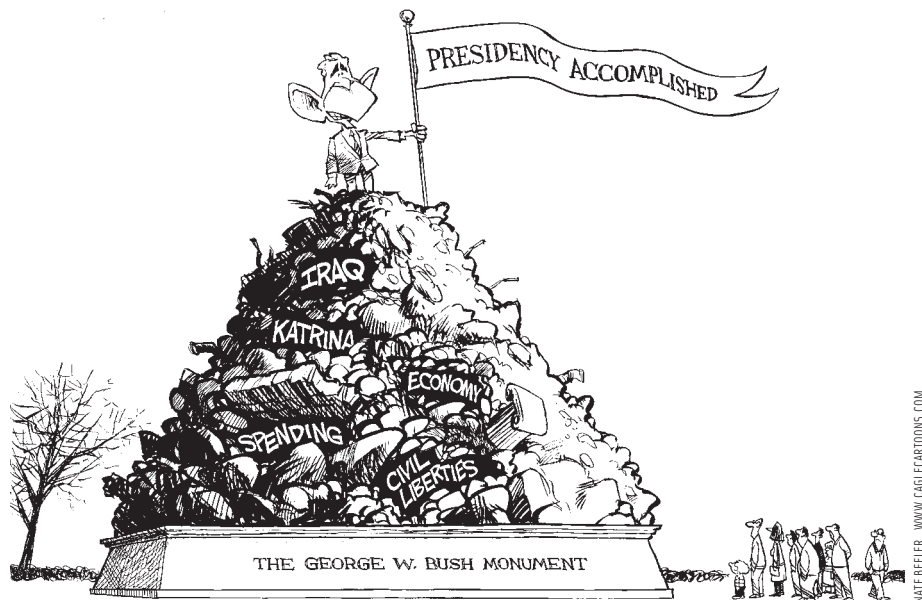
The dais has been built, the limos ordered, the commemorative T-shirts stacked to the ceilings of D.C. tourist traps. Inaugurations always send a current through the capital city. But this time, whether by historical moment or national despair, the air is particularly charged. As we go to press, days before Barack Obama's swearing in, millions are expected to brave the January chill in return for a glimpse, a golden line, a sense of better days to come.

But soon the party will be over, and the latest man from hope will have to sort his loyalties. Some constituency is sure to be disappointed. An obvious one comes to mind.

When the new president calculates whom he owes, he probably won't give much weight to the Obamacons—that dissident right wing that voted for him more to repudiate Bush Republicanism than to endorse liberal projects. And so far, they have reason to worry. Setting hawkish Hillary up at State and advancing an economic program that would shame FDR suggest that conservatism in its restrained, prudent sense isn't an Obama signature.

But this bloc is pivotal—self-described conservatives make up 35 percent of the voting population, and 20 percent of them voted for Obama. Come next election, they're also more likely to swing to a Republican challenger than the progressive interest groups President Obama will instinctively appease.

If he is indeed a paradigm shifter, Obama will heed the concerns of these unorthodox conservatives. Or maybe he is just another old-school Chicago politician who understands how to consolidate power. Either would work. We wish him well.



[OUTGOING]

EXIT STRATEGY

In his last press conference as commander in chief—or “ultimate exit interview,” as he called it—President George W. Bush finally admitted his great folly. After seven years and more than 4,000 American dead in Iraq, the wistful leader conceded, “Clearly, putting ‘Mission Accomplished’ on an aircraft carrier was a mistake. It sent the wrong message.”

Dubya didn't get any closer to contrition. Forget that his Mesopotamian adventure was the greatest foreign-policy blunder in American history. Ignore the calamitous missteps in the broader war on terror. Put aside the disastrous economic legacy. With nothing to lose, the 43rd president admitted to losing nothing.

Regrets, he had a few—like not pushing harder for his open-borders version of immigration reform. He said that Abu Ghraib was “a huge disappointment.” So was not finding weapons of mass destruction. “I don't know if you want to call those mistakes or not,” he hedged, “but they were ... things didn't go according to plan. Let's put it that way.” Put another way, he failed on all fronts.

Still he awarded himself a gold star: “I think it's a good, strong record,” the president concluded. “People still understand that America stands for freedom.” Perhaps he was trying to convince himself.

[ALLIES]

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS...

From the Credit Where Credit is Due Department, a postscript. President Bush will never be remembered as a peacemaker: two unresolved wars make that impossible. But he and Defense Secretary Robert Gates may have averted a third, cataclysmic war in the Middle East. The *New York Times* reports that early in 2008, the Israelis made plans to attack suspected Iranian nuclear facilities. They asked Bush to loan them bunker-busters and grant permission to fly over Iraq. According to one senior Bush aide, “We said ‘hell no.’”

Instead, the president gave Israel the one item on its wishlist that could only be used for defense, a new radar system. The *Times* reports that rather than confronting Iran directly, the administration has been engaged in a covert program to sabotage its nuclear development.

Bush's handling of the Iranian nuclear problem and Israel's panic showed courage and a deft hand. We only hope that his successor won't need seven years and two wars to develop the same restraint.

[GOP]

RONALD REAGAN & THE SIX DWARFS

The race for the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee has been like a long night of karaoke, as the contenders belt out the camp standards

of decades past. Sometimes they get the lyrics wrong—"Puff the Magic Dragon" became "Barack the Magic Negro" on a parody disc mailed to committeemen by Tennessee Republican Chip Saltsman. His earlier claim to fame was as campaign manager for Mike Huckabee, the Fox News host whose *métier* is more Guitar Hero than karaoke.

Republican committeemen elect their next leader—or fall guy—Jan. 28. Saltsman, incumbent chairman Mike Duncan, South Carolina's Katon Dawson, Ohio's Ken Blackwell, Saul Anuzis of Michigan, and Michael Steele of Maryland are the top contenders. They met for a televised debate Jan. 5. Only it's not much of a debate when the action consists of six middle-aged men vying to see who can get the syllables "Ronald Reagan" out of his mouth the fastest. *Washington Post* columnist Dana Milbank cataloged a few of the repetitions: "Ronald Reagan was president, and he got me excited" (Saltsman); "I was inspired as a college graduate by a fellow who walked in the room by the name of Ronald Reagan" (Dawson); "If you take a look at the constituency that we're losing today, it's the Reagan Democrats" (Anuzis).

"The questions changed, but the same answer kept coming. Steele spoke of 'what Ronald Reagan moved us to realize.' Blackwell quoted Reagan two more times, prompting Steele to remind everybody that he was 'inspired by the rhetoric and the words and the reality of a Ronald Reagan,'" Milbank continued.

The only thing more fatuous than the Reaganolalia were the candidates' bright ideas about harnessing the electoral muscle of Twitter and Facebook, thanks to which Ron Paul won the Republican presidential nomination last year. The contenders were silent on plans to crush Obama in 2012 by mobilizing the electorate with Nintendo Wii.

Those wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, economic collapse, illegal immigration?

You know the drill: cut taxes, get rid of earmarks, support the troops, family values. And of course, Ronald Reagan. Pity the poor GOP: its leaders haven't realized that people only love karaoke when they're drunk.

[TERROR]

GITMO SUPERSIZED

One of Barack Obama's first presidential acts will reportedly be an executive order closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay. The impulse is right: America can't indefinitely hold detainees without charges and pose as the rule of law's great champion. But implementation is thorny: the new administration hasn't figured out what to do with these 248 prisoners caught in legal limbo. Open trials could compromise national security, and evidence was often obtained by methods we'd rather not discuss.

But a lack of due process doesn't make the prisoners innocent. Up to 80 are considered terror threats, including alleged 9/11 architect Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. If a hapless goatherder caught in the dragnet didn't hate us before, years at Gitmo will have hardened his view. No one wants him moving in next door.

And Guantanamo, a dark stain indeed, isn't even the worst of it. Another 700 prisoners are detained at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. Their status is more complicated since they're being held in a war theater. But that shouldn't give the U.S. blanket permission to, as IPS News's William Fisher writes, "create a modern-day Star Chamber, where it can label an individual an 'enemy combatant,' deny him any meaningful ability to challenge that label, and on that basis, detain him indefinitely, virtually incommunicado, subject to interrogation and torture, without any right of redress."

As Obama enjoys credit for closing Gitmo, the Bagram prison is being expanded to hold 11,000. ■

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Another War, Another Defeat

The Gaza offensive has succeeded in punishing the Palestinians but not in making Israel more secure.

By John J. Mearsheimer

ISRAELIS AND THEIR American supporters claim that Israel learned its lessons well from the disastrous 2006 Lebanon war and has devised a winning strategy for the present war against Hamas. Of course, when a ceasefire comes, Israel will declare victory. Don't believe it. Israel has foolishly started another war it cannot win.

The campaign in Gaza is said to have two objectives: 1) to put an end to the rockets and mortars that Palestinians have been firing into southern Israel since it withdrew from Gaza in August 2005; 2) to restore Israel's deterrent, which was said to be diminished by the Lebanon fiasco, by Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, and by its inability to halt Iran's nuclear program.

But these are not the real goals of Operation Cast Lead. The actual purpose is connected to Israel's long-term vision of how it intends to live with millions of Palestinians in its midst. It is part of a broader strategic goal: the creation of a "Greater Israel." Specifically, Israel's leaders remain determined to control all of what used to be known as Mandate Palestine, which includes Gaza and the West Bank. The Palestinians would have limited autonomy in a handful of disconnected and economically crippled enclaves, one of which is Gaza. Israel would control the borders around them, movement between them, the air above and the water below them.

The key to achieving this is to inflict massive pain on the Palestinians so that

they come to accept the fact that they are a defeated people and that Israel will be largely responsible for controlling their future. This strategy, which was first articulated by Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s and has heavily influenced Israeli policy since 1948, is commonly referred to as the "Iron Wall."

What has been happening in Gaza is fully consistent with this strategy.

Let's begin with Israel's decision to withdraw from Gaza in 2005. The conventional wisdom is that Israel was serious about making peace with the Palestinians and that its leaders hoped the exit from Gaza would be a major step toward creating a viable Palestinian state. According to the *New York Times'* Thomas L. Friedman, Israel was giving the Palestinians an opportunity to "build a decent mini-state there—a Dubai on the Mediterranean," and if they did so, it would "fundamentally reshape the Israeli debate about whether the Palestinians can be handed most of the West Bank."

This is pure fiction. Even before Hamas came to power, the Israelis intended to create an open-air prison for the Palestinians in Gaza and inflict great pain on them until they complied with Israel's wishes. Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon's closest adviser at the time, candidly stated that the disengagement from Gaza was aimed at halting the peace process, not encouraging it. He described the disengagement as "formaldehyde that's necessary so that

there will not be a political process with the Palestinians." Moreover, he emphasized that the withdrawal "places the Palestinians under tremendous pressure. It forces them into a corner where they hate to be."

Arnon Soffer, a prominent Israeli demographer who also advised Sharon, elaborated on what that pressure would look like. "When 2.5 million people live in a closed-off Gaza, it's going to be a human catastrophe. Those people will become even bigger animals than they are today, with the aid of an insane fundamentalist Islam. The pressure at the border will be awful. It's going to be a terrible war. So, if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day."

In January 2006, five months after the Israelis pulled their settlers out of Gaza, Hamas won a decisive victory over Fatah in the Palestinian legislative elections. This meant trouble for Israel's strategy because Hamas was democratically elected, well organized, not corrupt like Fatah, and unwilling to accept Israel's existence. Israel responded by ratcheting up economic pressure on the Palestinians, but it did not work. In fact, the situation took another turn for the worse in March 2007, when Fatah and Hamas came together to form a national unity government. Hamas's stature and political power were growing, and Israel's divide-and-conquer strategy was unraveling.

To make matters worse, the national unity government began pushing for a long-term ceasefire. The Palestinians would end all missile attacks on Israel if the Israelis would stop arresting and assassinating Palestinians and end their economic stranglehold, opening the border crossings into Gaza.

Israel rejected that offer and with American backing set out to foment a civil war between Fatah and Hamas that would wreck the national unity government and put Fatah in charge. The plan backfired when Hamas drove Fatah out of Gaza, leaving Hamas in charge there and the more pliant Fatah in control of the West Bank. Israel then tightened the screws on the blockade around Gaza, causing even greater hardship and suffering among the Palestinians living there.

Hamas responded by continuing to fire rockets and mortars into Israel, while emphasizing that they still sought a long-term ceasefire, perhaps lasting ten years or more. This was not a noble gesture on Hamas's part: they sought a ceasefire because the balance of power heavily favored Israel. The Israelis had no interest in a ceasefire and merely intensified the economic pressure on Gaza. But in the late spring of 2008, pressure from Israelis living under the rocket attacks led the government to agree to a six-month ceasefire starting on June 19. That agreement, which formally ended on Dec. 19, immediately preceded the present war, which began on Dec. 27.

The official Israeli position blames Hamas for undermining the ceasefire. This view is widely accepted in the United States, but it is not true. Israeli leaders disliked the ceasefire from the start, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak instructed the IDF to begin preparing for the present war while the ceasefire was being negotiated in June 2008. Furthermore, Dan Gillerman,

Israel's former ambassador to the UN, reports that Jerusalem began to prepare the propaganda campaign to sell the present war months before the conflict began. For its part, Hamas drastically reduced the number of missile attacks during the first five months of the ceasefire. A total of two rockets were fired into Israel during September and October, none by Hamas.

How did Israel behave during this same period? It continued arresting and assassinating Palestinians on the West Bank, and it continued the deadly blockade that was slowly strangling Gaza. Then on Nov. 4, as Americans voted for a new president, Israel attacked a tunnel inside Gaza and killed six Palestinians. It was the first major violation of the ceasefire, and the Palestinians—who had been “careful to maintain the ceasefire,” according to Israel's Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center—responded by resuming rocket attacks. The calm that had prevailed since June vanished as

an end to the arrests and assassinations as well as the lifting of the blockade. But the Israelis, having used the ceasefire to prepare for war against Hamas, rejected this overture. The bombing of Gaza commenced eight days after the failed ceasefire formally ended.

If Israel wanted to stop missile attacks from Gaza, it could have done so by arranging a long-term ceasefire with Hamas. And if Israel were genuinely interested in creating a viable Palestinian state, it could have worked with the national unity government to implement a meaningful ceasefire and change Hamas's thinking about a two-state solution. But Israel has a different agenda: it is determined to employ the Iron Wall strategy to get the Palestinians in Gaza to accept their fate as hapless subjects of a Greater Israel.

This brutal policy is clearly reflected in Israel's conduct of the Gaza War. Israel and its supporters claim that the IDF is going to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties, in some cases taking

ON NOV. 4, AS AMERICANS VOTED FOR A NEW PRESIDENT, ISRAEL ATTACKED A TUNNEL INSIDE GAZA AND KILLED SIX PALESTINIANS. IT WAS THE FIRST MAJOR VIOLATION OF THE CEASEFIRE.

Israel ratcheted up the blockade and its attacks into Gaza and the Palestinians hurled more rockets at Israel. It is worth noting that not a single Israeli was killed by Palestinian missiles between Nov. 4 and the launching of the war on Dec. 27.

As the violence increased, Hamas made clear that it had no interest in extending the ceasefire beyond Dec. 19, which is hardly surprising, since it had not worked as intended. In mid-December, however, Hamas informed Israel that it was still willing to negotiate a long-term ceasefire if it included

risks that put Israeli soldiers in jeopardy. Hardly. One reason to doubt these claims is that Israel refuses to allow reporters into the war zone: it does not want the world to see what its soldiers and bombs are doing inside Gaza. At the same time, Israel has launched a massive propaganda campaign to put a positive spin on the horror stories that do emerge.

The best evidence, however, that Israel is deliberately seeking to punish the broader population in Gaza is the death and destruction the IDF has wrought on that small piece

of real estate. Israel has killed over 1,000 Palestinians and wounded more than 4,000. Over half of the casualties are civilians, and many are children. The IDF's opening salvo on Dec. 27 took place as children were leaving school, and one of its primary targets that day was a large group of graduating police cadets, who hardly qualified as terrorists. In what Ehud Barak called "an all-out war against Hamas," Israel has targeted a university, schools, mosques, homes, apartment buildings, government offices, and even ambulances. A senior Israeli military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, explained the logic behind Israel's expansive target set: "There are many aspects of Hamas,

million Palestinian civilians," as *Ha'aretz* put it in an editorial, but argue that it will eventually achieve its war aims and the rest of the world will quickly forget the horrors inflicted on the people of Gaza.

This is wishful thinking. For starters, Israel is unlikely to stop the rocket fire for any appreciable period of time unless it agrees to open Gaza's borders and stop arresting and killing Palestinians. Israelis talk about cutting off the supply of rockets and mortars into Gaza, but weapons will continue to come in via secret tunnels and ships that sneak through Israel's naval blockade. It will also be impossible to police all of the goods sent into Gaza through legitimate channels.

THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO THINK THAT THE ISRAELIS CAN BEAT HAMAS INTO SUBMISSION AND GET THE PALESTINIANS TO LIVE QUIETLY IN A HANDFUL OF BANTUSTANS INSIDE GREATER ISRAEL.

and we are trying to hit the whole spectrum, because everything is connected and everything supports terrorism against Israel." In other words, everyone is a terrorist and everything is a legitimate target.

Israelis tend to be blunt, and they occasionally say what they are really doing. After the IDF killed 40 Palestinian civilians in a UN school on Jan. 6, *Ha'aretz* reported that "senior officers admit that the IDF has been using enormous firepower." One officer explained, "For us, being cautious means being aggressive. From the minute we entered, we've acted like we're at war. That creates enormous damage on the ground ... I just hope those who have fled the area of Gaza City in which we are operating will describe the shock."

One might accept that Israel is waging "a cruel, all-out war against 1.5

Israel could try to conquer all of Gaza and lock the place down. That would probably stop the rocket attacks if Israel deployed a large enough force. But then the IDF would be bogged down in a costly occupation against a deeply hostile population. They would eventually have to leave, and the rocket fire would resume. And if Israel fails to stop the rocket fire and keep it stopped, as seems likely, its deterrent will be diminished, not strengthened.

More importantly, there is little reason to think that the Israelis can beat Hamas into submission and get the Palestinians to live quietly in a handful of Bantustans inside Greater Israel. Israel has been humiliating, torturing, and killing Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1967 and has not come close to cowing them. Indeed, Hamas's reaction to Israel's

brutality seems to lend credence to Nietzsche's remark that what does not kill you makes you stronger.

But even if the unexpected happens and the Palestinians cave, Israel would still lose because it will become an apartheid state. As Prime Minister Ehud Olmert recently said, Israel will "face a South African-style struggle" if the Palestinians do not get a viable state of their own. "As soon as that happens," he argued, "the state of Israel is finished." Yet Olmert has done nothing to stop settlement expansion and create a viable Palestinian state, relying instead on the Iron Wall strategy to deal with the Palestinians.

There is also little chance that people around the world who follow the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will soon forget the appalling punishment that Israel is meting out in Gaza. The destruction is just too obvious to miss, and too many people—especially in the Arab and Islamic world—care about the Palestinians' fate. Moreover, discourse about this long-standing conflict has undergone a sea change in the West in recent years, and many of us who were once wholly sympathetic to Israel now see that the Israelis are the victimizers and the Palestinians are the victims. What is happening in Gaza will accelerate that changing picture of the conflict and long be seen as a dark stain on Israel's reputation.

The bottom line is that no matter what happens on the battlefield, Israel cannot win its war in Gaza. In fact, it is pursuing a strategy—with lots of help from its so-called friends in the Diaspora—that is placing its long-term future at risk. ■

John J. Mearsheimer is a professor of political science at the University of Chicago and coauthor of The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.

Captive Nation

How Gaza became a Palestinian prison

By Avi Shlaim

THE ONLY WAY to make sense of Israel's senseless war in Gaza is through historical context. Establishing the state of Israel in May 1948 involved a monumental injustice to the Palestinians. British officials bitterly resented American partisanship on behalf of the infant state. On June 2, 1948, Sir John Troutbeck wrote to Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin that the Americans were responsible for the creation of a gangster state headed by "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders." I used to think that this judgment was too harsh, but Israel's assault on Gaza and the Bush administration's complicity have reopened the question.

I served loyally in the Israeli army in the 1960s and have never questioned the legitimacy of the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. What I reject is the Zionist colonial project beyond the Green Line. The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of the 1967 War had little to do with security and everything to do with territorial expansionism. The aim was to establish Greater Israel through permanent political, economic, and military control over the Palestinian territories.

With a population of refugees crammed into a tiny strip of land with no infrastructure or natural resources, Gaza's prospects were never bright. Yet this is not an instance of economic underdevelopment but a uniquely cruel case of deliberate de-development. To use the Biblical phrase, Israel turned the people of Gaza into hewers of wood

and the drawers of water—a source of cheap labor and a captive market for Israeli goods. Local industry was actively impeded so as to make it impossible for the Palestinians to end their subordination and establish the economic underpinnings essential for independence.

In 2005, Jewish settlers numbered only 8,000 compared with 1.4 million local residents. Yet the settlers controlled 25 percent of the territory, 40 percent of the arable land, and the lion's share of scarce water resources. Cheek by jowl with these foreign intruders, the majority of the local population lived in unimaginable misery. Eighty percent still subsist on less than \$2 per day. Living conditions remain an affront to civilized values, a powerful precipitant to resistance, and a breeding ground for extremism.

In August 2005, a Likud government headed by Ariel Sharon staged a unilateral Israeli pullout, withdrawing settlers and destroying the houses they left behind. Sharon presented the withdrawal as a contribution to peace based on a two-state solution. But the year after, another 12,000 Israelis settled on the West Bank, further reducing the scope for an independent Palestinian state. Land-grabbing and peace-making are simply incompatible.

The real purpose behind the move was to redraw the borders of Greater Israel by incorporating the main settlement blocs on the West Bank to the state of Israel. Withdrawal from Gaza was thus not a prelude to peace but to

further Zionist expansion on the West Bank. It was a unilateral move undertaken in what was seen as the Israeli national interest.

Israel's settlers were withdrawn, but Israeli soldiers continued to control all access to the Gaza Strip. The Israeli air force enjoyed unrestricted freedom to drop bombs, make sonic booms by flying low and breaking the sound barrier, and terrorize the hapless inhabitants.

Israel portrays itself as an island of democracy in a sea of authoritarianism. Yet Israel has never done anything to promote democracy on the Arab side and has done a great deal to undermine it. Israel has a long history of secret collaboration with reactionary Arab regimes to suppress Palestinian nationalism. Despite all the handicaps, the Palestinian people succeeded in building the only democracy in the Arab world with the possible exception of Lebanon. In January 2006, free and fair elections brought to power a Hamas-led government. Israel, however, refused to recognize the democratically elected government, claiming that Hamas is purely a terrorist organization.

America and the EU joined Israel in demonizing the Hamas government and trying to bring it down. A surreal situation thus developed with a significant part of the international community imposing sanctions not against the occupier but against the occupied.

Israel's propaganda machine purveys the notion that the Palestinians are terrorists, that they reject coexistence with the Jewish state, that their nationalism is little more than anti-Semitism, that Hamas is just a bunch of religious fanatics. But the truth is that the Palestinians are a normal people with normal aspirations. They want a piece of land on which to live in freedom and dignity.

Like other radical movements, Hamas began to moderate following its rise to power. From the ideological rejectionism of its charter, it moved toward pragmatic accommodation of a two-state solution. In March 2007, Hamas and Fatah formed a unity government that was ready to negotiate a long-term ceasefire. But Israel refused to negotiate with a government that included Hamas.

It continued to play the old game of divide-and-rule between rival Palestinian factions. In the late 1980s, Israel supported nascent Hamas in order to weaken Fatah, the secular nationalist movement led by Yasser Arafat. Now Israel began to encourage the corrupt and pliant Fatah leaders to overthrow their religious political rivals and recapture power. American neoconservatives participated in the plot to instigate a Palestinian civil war. Their meddling was a major factor in the collapse of the national unity government and in driving Hamas to seize power in Gaza in June 2007 to preempt a Fatah coup.

The war on Gaza is the culmination of confrontations with the Hamas government. In a broader sense, however, it is a war between Israel and the Palestinian people who elected it to power. The declared aim of the war is to weaken Hamas until it agrees to a ceasefire on Israel's terms. The undeclared aim is to ensure that the Palestinians are seen by the world as a humanitarian problem, derailing their struggle for statehood.

As always, mighty Israel claims to be the victim of Palestinian aggression, but the asymmetry of power leaves little room for doubt as to who the real victim is. To be sure, Hamas is not an entirely innocent party. Denied the fruit of its electoral victory and confronted with an unscrupulous adversary, it has resorted to the weapon of the weak—terror. The damage caused by these

primitive Qassam rockets is minimal, but the psychological impact is immense, prompting the public to demand protection from its government. Israel has the right to act in self-defense, but its response has been disproportionate. In the three years since the withdrawal from Gaza, 11 Israelis have been killed by rocket fire. In 2005 to 2007 alone, the IDF killed 1,290 Palestinians in Gaza, including 222 children.

Whatever the numbers, killing civilians is wrong. This applies to Israel as much as it does to Hamas—and Israel's record is one of unrelenting brutality toward the inhabitants of Gaza. Israel maintained the blockade after the ceasefire came into force, which in the view of Hamas leaders amounted to a violation of the agreement. During the ceasefire, Israel prevented any exports from leaving the strip. Officially, 49.1 percent of the population is unemployed. At the same time, Israel restricted the number of trucks carrying food, fuel, cooking-gas canisters, spare parts for water and sanitation plants, and medical supplies to Gaza. It is difficult to see how starving and freezing civilians could protect Israel. But even if it did, it would still be immoral, a form of collective punishment forbidden by international law.

The brutality of Israel's soldiers is matched by the mendacity of its spokesmen. Eight months before launching the war on Gaza, Israel established a National Information Directorate. Its core messages are that Hamas broke the ceasefire agreements; that Israel's objective is the defense of its population; and that Israel's forces are taking the utmost care not to hurt civilians. But it was not Hamas but the IDF that broke the ceasefire, with a raid into Gaza on Nov. 4 that killed six Hamas men. Israel's objective is not just the defense of its population but the eventual overthrow of the Hamas

government by turning the people against their rulers. And far from taking care to spare civilians, Israel is guilty of indiscriminate bombing and of a three-year blockade that has brought the inhabitants of Gaza to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

No amount of military escalation can buy Israel immunity from rocket attacks from the military wing of Hamas. Despite all the death and destruction that Israel has inflicted on them, they kept up their resistance. This is a movement that glorifies victimhood and martyrdom. The only way for Israel to achieve security is not through shooting but through talks with Hamas, which has repeatedly declared its readiness to negotiate a long-term ceasefire with the Jewish state within its pre-1967 borders. Israel has rejected this offer for the same reason it spurned the Arab League peace plan of 2002: it involves concessions and compromises.

Israel's record over the past four decades makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that it has become a rogue state with "an utterly unscrupulous set of leaders." A rogue state habitually violates international law, possesses WMD, and practices terrorism—the use of violence against civilians for political purposes.

Israel's real aim is not peaceful coexistence with its Palestinian neighbors but military domination. It keeps compounding the mistakes of the past with new and more disastrous ones. Politicians are of course free to repeat lies and mistakes. But it is not mandatory to do so. ■

Avi Shlaim is author of The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World and Lion of Jordan: King Hussein's Life in War and Peace. This essay is adapted from a piece that originally appeared in The Guardian.

Operation Cast Ballot

The political calculation behind Olmert's war

By Tom Streithorst

ACCORDING TO THE ISRAELI media, four days before Gaza was attacked, Hamas offered to extend the ceasefire and end all rocket fire into southern Israel. In return, they asked for a lifting of the blockade choking Gaza and an extension of the ceasefire to the West Bank—reasonable enough demands. But the Israeli cabinet rejected the offer and decided to go to war.

Let us not forget who broke the ceasefire. Until Nov. 4, when the Israelis sent in commandos and killed six Palestinian militants near Khan Yunis, for the most part the ceasefire held. During the six-month truce, despite the Israeli stranglehold on Gaza's borders, not one Israeli died or was wounded from rocket attacks.

After the Israeli incursion in early November, retaliatory rocket fire naturally ratcheted up, providing the provocation that led to the Israeli invasion. Since the beginning of the Israeli bombing, four Israeli civilians have been killed by rocket fire, four more than died during the previous six months. More rockets have been fired out of Gaza just about every day since the war began than during the entire six months of the truce. It seems that if the Israeli goal was to protect their citizens, they aren't going about it very well.

I would suggest, from personal experience, that protecting the citizens of Sderot might not be the main motivation of the Israeli government.

In 2002, toward the end of the second Intifada, I was working in Jerusalem for an American television

network. Essentially I was on suicide-bomb watch. Although we would do an occasional story on the 24-hour curfews randomly imposed on the West Bank or on Palestinian children killed while riding their bicycles in broad daylight in a middle-class neighborhood in Jenin, the reason our bosses in New York paid us to sit in Jerusalem was to cover suicide-bomb attacks on Israelis. Dead Palestinians rarely make news. Dead Israelis do.

For the first six weeks of my tour, tranquillity reigned within Israel. No suicide bombs anywhere. While being paid combat wages, I mostly lollygagged by the pool. A colleague told me, "It's too quiet, Sharon is going to do something." I thought he was paranoid, perhaps even anti-Semitic.

On Friday, July 19, 2002, we heard that Hamas was about to declare a truce. If a bunch of journalists knew about it, surely the Israeli government did, too. Although I was happy that peace was about to break out in the Holy Land, I was sorry that my sinecure was about to end. Without the threat of suicide attacks, my bosses would surely pull me out.

Over the weekend, the rumors coalesced. The truce was to be declared on Tuesday. But on Monday night, 12 hours before Hamas was to declare a unilateral ceasefire, the Israelis decided to bomb the center of Gaza City, targeting a Hamas leader. They killed him along with 14 civilians, nine of them children. To no one's surprise, Hamas decided not to declare a truce. A week later, the

first suicide bomb in months. The day after, the shocking attack on Hebrew University, which killed five students. The war was back on.

The Israeli government explained the air attack of June 22, 2002 by saying that they found a high-value target, Saleh Shahada, and had to take advantage of the actionable intelligence. At the time Shahada was sleeping in his home. He probably had slept there before. Was taking him out worth disrupting the proposed ceasefire? Kill one man, make a martyr of him, and someone else will inevitably replace him. It doesn't seem logical if your goal is peace and tranquillity.

There is, of course, a cynical viewpoint, one shared by most journalists and just about all the Palestinians I talked to at the time: disrupting the proposed ceasefire was not a regrettable result but the very purpose of the attack. A truce without preconditions would make Hamas seem moderate and sensible and would not play well in Israeli propaganda. Better to goad them, even at the cost of increased hostility, even if it provoked retaliation, even if it meant more Israelis would die.

On Feb. 10, Israel holds elections. Before the invasion, the ruling Kadima Party was expected to lose. Since the invasion, their poll numbers have risen. Perhaps this, rather than the protection of Sderot from homemade rockets, better explains the slaughter in Gaza. ■

Tom Streithorst has worked as a cameraman for 20 years.

Picking Up the Peace

Toward a settlement without illusions

By Daniel Levy

AT THIS WRITING, the Gaza crisis continues, exacting a painful toll on the civilian population, hammering Israel's image in ways unseen since Lebanon in the early 1980s, and relegating talk of peace to the funny pages. The working assumption is that there will be a ceasefire in which Hamas continues to be the governing address for Gaza—a political victory for the Islamic Resistance Movement (the literal translation of the acronym for Hamas). But for a ceasefire to hold, there will need to be an opening of the border crossings in an ongoing and predictable way, as well as a mechanism for preventing weapons smuggling into Gaza.

The desire to avoid any semblance of Hamas achievement is one factor that has prolonged the fighting and encouraged alternative endgame scenarios. But the other options are even less attractive or realistic: an indefinite Israeli re-occupation of Gaza (publicly unpopular and militarily draining given anticipated resistance), handing Gaza over to Palestinian Authority/Fatah control (a killer blow for Fatah credibility when conducted on the back of an Israeli tank and likely to lead to an anti-PA insurgency in Gaza and possibly the West Bank), or stationing international forces in Gaza (just try recruiting nations willing to deploy for that mission). There is an in-between option: IDF troops remain on the Gazan side of the border with Egypt or conduct ongoing incursions, as they do in West Bank cities, creating conditions hardly conducive to a ceasefire.

Whatever the details of the de-escalation, when the smoke clears there will still be Hamas, there will be more angry Palestinians and Israelis, and the 94 percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territories that is not Gaza will still be dotted with settlements and Israeli forces. The larger conflict will remain very much unresolved.

Some might be tempted to push on with the Annapolis process launched by President Bush in November 2007. The new Obama administration will almost certainly flirt with the idea. But doing so would mean ignoring the flaws in the existing approach that the Gaza crisis has cruelly exposed. A hesitant Israeli leadership, enfeebled Palestinian Authority, and popularly challenged Arab regimes have all found a shared comfort zone in a process that has no end and almost never requires hard choices. Except that Operation Cast Lead has shown this zone to be not so comforting after all.

The edifice upon which Annapolis and U.S. policy toward the conflict have been constructed cannot hold. Israel, Fatah, and America's Arab allies are unwilling or unable (sometimes both) to take the kind of action that might constitute a robust alliance against the regional forces that challenge them—forces of change and resistance, sometimes violent, often religiously inspired. Israel is not ending the settlements and occupation. The moderate Arab states cannot openly embrace Israel absent this step. And Fatah has neither the legitimacy nor

the capacity to sign or implement a reasonable deal were such an offer available. The state of contemporary Israeli-Palestinian relations is one of conflict, not partnership. Israel and Fatah cannot defy this reality without a radical reconfiguration of the landscape.

The Gaza crisis has brought all of this to the fore. The handicap that plagues the so-called "alliance of the moderates" is visible in all its debilitating deformity. Israel brings destruction on Gaza and claims it is serving the cause of moderation and peace. Enraged Palestinians disown Fatah and the PA, accusing them of complicity, and are in turn intimidated by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank. Fatah leaders fight among themselves. Certain Arab allies are quietly supportive of Israel's move, or unwilling to counter it, and are thereby further alienated from their own publics. Egypt bears the brunt of popular regional displeasure. The regime in Cairo looks more fragile than at any time during the 17 years of Mubarak's rule, and such frailty is no basis for regional leadership. The idea that this collection of actors holds the key to negotiating and implementing an historic peace simply does not pass muster.

The policy question for the new U.S. government is whether there will be an acknowledgement of the collateral damage inflicted upon the Annapolis process during this Gaza crisis. It is now a victim of friendly fire and will need to find its resting place alongside many far more innocent victims.

There is no decisive victory to be had in the Middle East against an axis that is sometimes called “Iran-Syria-Hamas-Hezbollah,” but which is far more and far less than that. Less in that the so-called extremists do not walk in lock-step. There are distinct national, movement, and religious tensions within this camp. We are often the glue that holds them together. They also represent far more, offering an alternative narrative, many elements of which have popular appeal, and a broad following in the region—not just with Islamists but with democrats, reformers, and nationalist-based oppositions. Paradoxically, these may well be the people who can most effectively counter the brand of Islamism that actually does represent an implacable and dangerous foe: al-Qaeda-style Salafi extremism.

The Bush administration’s attempt to score a decisive victory for the so-called forces of moderation has more often than not been rejected in the region as an antidemocratic, humiliating neo-imperialist project. It has of course also been used as a recruiting tool by al-Qaeda and Co.

After Gaza, all sides must take a step back from exacerbating tensions, deepening divisions, and dreaming of unequivocal victories in this destabilized Middle East. The language of moderates versus extremists must be abandoned or at least much more sparingly applied. It is relevant for the Salafi jihadists, but that is it.

A new starting place would be to differentiate and disaggregate the various actors lined up against the U.S., Israel, and the ancien regimes. A region bubbling over with conflicts that are part regional proxy, part local circumstance is not a desirable situation. Gaza is the latest example—and a particularly bloody one.

The best way forward is simultaneously to de-escalate tensions at the

regional level and resolve or at least defuse specific local conflicts. For instance, at the regional level, a Syrian-Saudi reconciliation might be encouraged and a similar approach adopted for overcoming internal Palestinian divisions. More broadly, and over time, a *modus vivendi* will need to be found with the non-al-Qaeda reformist Islamist groups, often associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. None of this means that the excesses of the hardline narrative or the recourse to unprovoked violence should be accepted. The de-escalation formula will probably face its keenest challenge in attempts to test flexibility in Iran’s behavior. The current approach has mostly served to extend Iran’s reach well beyond its natural echo chamber.

Gaza again is an example. The Hamas-Israel conflict is primarily a local one, but if the local circumstances are not addressed, it can take on regional dimensions, as is currently the case. The local conflict and the regional equation—Syria, Iran, and the Muslim Brothers back Hamas; America and its allies are ranged against Hamas—feed off one another. De-escalation should happen in both directions, regional and local.

Recent developments in Lebanon may be instructive. Hezbollah has not joined the Gaza confrontation, avoiding a second front with Israel (at least as of day 18 of the conflict). According to the regional dynamic, Hezbollah should be getting involved. But in this case, the local dynamic is pushing in a different direction. The power-sharing arrangement in Lebanon brokered by Qatar sees Hezbollah back in government and looking ahead to new elections in June. A local incentive has been created which causes Hezbollah, a constituency-based organization, to weigh local considerations against regional alliance ones. So far local concerns are proving more resilient.

Now apply that to Hamas, Gaza, and the Israel-Palestine situation. Insufficient local incentive has been created to affect Hamas’s calculation. Hamas is also a constituency-based organization, attentive to the needs of the Palestinian population. By maintaining the closure on Gaza, Israel and the international community gave up a potential lever for modifying Hamas’s behavior—public Gazan pressure for extending the ceasefire. Likewise, when a Palestinian power-sharing arrangement was negotiated in the Saudi-brokered Mecca deal of February 2007, it was opposed and actively undermined. An opportunity was again missed for reframing Hamas’s options. The situation is most decisively effected by paralysis in addressing the bigger issue—the need for de-occupation and Palestinian statehood alongside secure borders for Israel.

A post-Gaza reconfiguration of Middle East policy may not come with the hugs and handshakes of past peace deals. It may look more like a begrudging separation with hard borders, international guarantees, and even NATO forces deployed, as well as strong incentive packages for both sides. It will require local conflict-resolution and regional de-escalation components. Crucially, it will demand an American rethink and a jettisoning of the certainties of neocon dogma, support of credible mediators where possible (sometimes European, sometimes regional such as Qatar or Turkey), and finally, frank discussions between the U.S. and its regional allies—and that does not just mean Israel. ■

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Unanimous Consent

When Israel acts, Congress applauds. No debate required.

By Glenn Greenwald

IN MOST OF THE WORLD, the Israeli attack on Gaza is viewed as an intensely controversial act and, more commonly, an excessive, unjustifiable, and brutal assault on a trapped civilian population. But not in the United States—at least not among America's political and opinion-making elite. Here one finds a bipartisan consensus as simplistic as it is unquestioned: Israel's bombing campaign and invasion of Gaza are right and just, and it is the duty of the U.S. to support these actions unequivocally.

From the moment Israel began dropping bombs on Gaza, leaders of America's two major political parties rushed to announce their total support, competing to see who could most fulsomely praise the offensive. So complete was the agreement that they all seemed to be reading from the same script. While other Western governments issued even-handed statements condemning both Israel and Hamas and their diplomats worked furiously to forge a cease-fire agreement, America's political leaders stood on the sidelines, cheering with increasing fervor.

When it comes to Israel's various military actions, there is far more dissent within Israel, where one commonly finds prominent, vehement criticism of the Israeli government, than there is within the U.S., where such criticism is all but nonexistent. Indeed, in the U.S. Congress, there is far more unqualified support for Israel's wars than for America's own.

The refusal of our political leaders to

deviate even slightly from this ritual reached its zenith during the week of Jan. 5, when events in Gaza heightened worldwide opposition to the Israeli attack. The Palestinian death toll exceeded 800, with more than 3,000 wounded. The UN reported that roughly a third of the dead and wounded were children, that Gaza was on the verge of collapse, that its residents were on the brink of mass starvation. Israel bombed a school where the UN had established a shelter, killing 40 refugees hiding there in terror. The Israeli Defense Force initially claimed that Hamas militants had shot from a rooftop of the school and Israel merely returned fire. But the following day, when the UN investigated and found that claim to be false, Israel was forced to acknowledge that no such provocation occurred. Instead, the IDF said, the bombing of the school was merely an accident.

The next day, the Red Cross, which for a full week had been prevented by the IDF from entering Gaza, unveiled a gruesome discovery: numerous children, too emaciated even to stand up, had spent days in an apartment complex lying next to the corpses of their parents and other relatives as the IDF blocked ambulances from reaching them. The same day, the UN suggested that Israel had committed war crimes, citing an appalling incident in which the Israelis ordered some 110 civilians to enter a house and stay there, then proceeded to shell the building, killing 30 civilians inside. Though the IDF

physically prevented journalists from entering Gaza, even in the face of a week-old order from the Israeli Supreme Court directing them to allow access, documented stories began emerging of large extended families in Gaza—parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and small children—extinguished by Israeli attacks.

The world recoiled in horror. Angry street demonstrations erupted in Europe, and condemnations of Israel from the UN and Red Cross were unusually strident.

It was at this moment that the American Congress inserted itself—and, in effect, the United States—into the war, and did so in the most one-sided manner possible. As the Palestinian body count and international anger mounted, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) introduced a non-binding resolution that expressed unequivocal American support for the Israeli attack and formally declared that all blame for the war and all responsibility to end it rested with Hamas—none with Israel. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee quickly announced its full support.

AIPAC's enthusiasm was unsurprising since the text of the resolution could easily have been written by the Israeli government. Every sentence was framed exclusively from the Israeli perspective, each clause grounded on the premise that Israel was 100 percent just. Not a word of criticism or even reservation. On the contrary, Berman's

resolution praised Israel for its humanitarian conduct of the war—even as the UN accused Israel of possible war crimes and the Red Cross vehemently complained about the IDF's impeding of medical and other humanitarian services. Most notably, the resolution expressed unyielding American dedication to the "welfare" of Israel, both in general terms and with regard to this war.

In the Senate, support for the resolution was absolute across party and ideological lines. Its chief sponsors were Majority Leader Harry Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Not a single senator—not one—expressed opposition, so there was no need for a roll-call vote. On Jan. 8, as images of a burning Gaza were being broadcast around the world, the Senate approved the resolution by unanimous consent, without objection.

Two days later, the House followed suit. Of the 435 members of Congress, a grand total of five voted against the resolution, while 20 voted "present." The rest—from the farthest left precincts of the Democratic Party to the farthest right wing of the Republican Party, from all four corners of the country and everywhere in between—found common cause in lending full-throated support to Israel's war.

What makes this transpartisan consensus so notable is not merely the improbability of 510 ideologically diverse lawmakers all looking at this perplexing and contentious war and just happening to decide that Israel is fully in the right. Beyond the abstract question of whether Israel's attack is justified lies the weightier question of whether the United States should incur the wrath of much of the world, and virtually the entire Muslim world, by involving itself in this war. Remarkably, the consensus extended not only to the view that Israel was right to attack

Gaza, but that the U.S. should formalize its support for Israel's offensive.

Though the resolution was nonbinding, it was not inconsequential. At a time when worldwide disgust was at its peak, the U.S. made Israel's war our war, its enemies our enemies, its intractable disputes ours, and the hostility generated by Israeli actions our own. And we emboldened Israel to continue.

Given that we hear endlessly from our political establishment that the first obligation of our leaders is to keep us safe—that's the justification for everything from torture to presidential law-breaking—what legitimate rationale is there for the U.S. Congress to act in unison to redirect worldwide anger against Israel toward American citizens? How are U.S. interests advanced

by insinuating ourselves into such an entrenched conflict? Answers to those questions from supporters of the resolution were never required because those questions were never asked. As dubious a proposition as it is, the notion that American interests are inherently advanced by lending unquestioning support to Israel is one of the country's most hardened and unexamined premises.

What makes this accord among America's political class more notable still is how disconnected it is from American public opinion. Last July, a poll from the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes found that 71 percent of Americans want the U.S. government not to take sides in the Israeli-Palestinian con-

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- 3 Sen. Jon Cornyn
- 4 House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
- 5 Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
- 6 House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
- 7 Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
- 8 Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl



- A** "The rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza, which were increasing in frequency and range, constituted an unacceptable security threat to which Israel had a responsibility to respond."
- B** "I think what the Israelis are doing is very important. I think this terrorist organization, Hamas, has got to be put away."
- C** "Israel is acting in clear self-defense in response to heinous rocket attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza."
- D** "This recent outburst of violence was instigated by Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist group supported by Iran and Syria that calls for Israel's destruction."
- E** "Three years ago, Israel withdrew from every square inch of Gaza. And since that withdrawal, [Israel's] civilians have been targeted by more than 6,000 rockets and mortars fired from Gaza. In the face of this relentless bombardment, Israel has acted with a restraint that other countries, faced with a similar threat, would find hard to fathom."
- F** "Israel's recent defensive military operations in the Gaza Strip against Hamas have been both warranted and fully justified. ... Hamas is nothing more than a terrorist organization driven by hatred, fear, and radical ideology."
- G** "A victory for Hamas is not simply a victory for Hamas; it is a victory for Iran. And a defeat for Hamas, which is in reach if we allow the Israeli action to continue, is a defeat for Iran and a victory for the United States and for the forces of democracy..."
- H** "Americans must support Israel because we understand since 9/11 that terrorism anywhere is a threat to free people everywhere."

ANSWERS: A, 4; B, 7; C, 6; D, 1; E, 5; F, 3; G, 2; H, 8

flict. Similarly, a Rasmussen study in early January—the first to survey American public opinion specifically regarding the Israeli attack on Gaza—found that Americans generally were “closely divided over whether the Jewish state should be taking military action against militants in the Gaza Strip” (41 to 44 percent, with 15 percent undecided), but Democratic voters overwhelmingly opposed the Israeli offensive—by a 24-point margin (31 to 55 percent). Yet those significant divisions were nowhere to be found in the actions of their ostensible representatives.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find in American political life any other issue of this consequence, complexity, and controversy that generates such absolute agreement within our political class. Even in the intense climate that prevailed in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, when most of America's elite institutions notoriously marched lock-step behind President Bush, there was substantial minority dissent. As pliant as the Democratic Party and the Congress were, there were still 22 senators and 133 House members—more than half of the Democratic caucus—willing to vote against the American invasion of Iraq.

There are few matters more important to America's future than the extent to which we continue to involve ourselves in endless Middle East wars. Our immersion in these conflicts profoundly affects every aspect of our country's welfare—military, diplomatic, economic, and civil. Yet there is an almost perfect inverse relationship between the significance of these policy questions and the extent to which they are debated by our political leaders. ■

Glenn Greenwald is author of Great American Hypocrites: Toppling the Big Myths of Republican Politics.

Iron Gates

Obama's secretary of defense is still a Bush man.

By Jeff Huber

SHORTLY AFTER Robert Gates replaced Donald Rumsfeld as secretary of defense, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks called him a "godsend." That was hardly the first or last time Brooks failed to see through a veneer. In fairly short order, Robert Gates has become a champion of American warmongery and, in many ways, a more effective handmaiden of the neoconservative agenda than Rummy ever was.

Gates can sound like the steady hand at the helm of our ship of war. "The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan," he assures us. "U.S. predominance in conventional warfare," he says, "is sustainable for the medium term given current trends," and "the days of hair-trigger superpower confrontation are over."

But pass a thumbnail over his rhetoric and you'll find a man with the plan to keep America perpetually mired in Third World wars while arming itself to fight World War III.

Since the Berlin Wall came down, America's armed services have been on a mission to justify their budgets. Jargon like "transformation" and "revolution in military affairs" dominated force-planning strategies throughout the 1990s. With no rival for open-ocean supremacy, the Navy focused on projecting air and land power ashore from littoral waters. The Army, lacking a large continental conflict to fight or prevent, retooled itself for rapid deployment to global hot spots. Absent any air superiority challenge or a strategic target set to bomb, the Air Force became the Army's chauffeur. The result was a Navy that's a coast guard with an air force

and an army, an Army that's a marine corps, and an Air Force that's an airline.

This Dr. Moreau force structure failed to defend us against the 9/11 attacks or to deter them, and only Bill Kristol and his thousand closest friends think our military is serving America's interests overseas. Yet incredibly, one of Gates's stated goals is "sustaining the institution."

In the latest issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Gates says, "The defining principle of the Pentagon's new National Defense Strategy is balance." His idea of balance seems to cover the spectrum from plucking cats out of trees to projecting power beyond the Van Allen radiation belt.

Gates admits that we have no need to prepare for a major ground war and says he expects we'll steer clear of further counterinsurgency bogs, but he was also behind the initiative to add 92,000 troops to the Army and Marines by 2011—the biggest boost in ground-force manning since the long war in Vietnam. Now Gates wants young bodies to wage a long war against an -ism, a kind of war that the globally respected defense analysts at the Rand Corporation insist is best conducted with "a light U.S. military footprint or none at all."

Displaying MacArthuresque disdain for the campaign promises of the new commander in chief and the status of forces agreement between Iraq and the U.S., Gates says, "there will continue to be some kind of U.S. advisory and counterterrorism effort in Iraq for years to come." One gathers that he means "years to come after 2011." Afghanistan, he says, "will require a significant U.S. military and economic commitment for some time."

Gates doesn't try to justify American entanglement in the Middle East with the standard "if we leave, they'll follow us here" boo. Maybe he's thinking everyone realizes by now that "they" don't have a navy or air force that can get them here in significant numbers, and they can't jump or swim that far. But the arguments he does make for staying the quagmire course are just as preposterous: "The United States' ability to deal with future threats will depend on its performance in current conflicts."

Nothing in history indicates that the result of any given war dictates the outcome of conflicts that follow. America was on its way to posting an undefeated century until our fiasco in Southeast Asia came along. By Gates's logic, the United States should have been done as a superpower after Vietnam, but we went on instead to become the first global hegemon.

Everyone from the ancient Stoics to your grandma has admonished you not to worry what others think of you. But Gates would have the United States persist in two self-defeating wars for fear of being taunted on the playground. *Ahmed says you're a sissy if you stop hammering that nail into your eye.* Imagine what Ahmed will think of us if we don't stop hammering.

Few deceptions of the American public in the 21st century have been quite so cruel as the myth of the "successful counterinsurgency." The only ones who ever truly win an insurgency war are those with home-field advantage. The best you can do in an away game is to cut your losses early or stay so long that by the time you leave nobody notices.

Gates says that our military "became an effective instrument of counterinsurgency" in Iraq, but he skirts the fact that the improved violence statistics largely came about as a result of "Teflon General" David Petraeus bribing militiamen not to use the guns he gave them. Now

we have to stick around forever to make sure the payola gets into the right hands and keep the Iranians or al-Qaeda or some other Islamo-fabulist scapegoat from coming along and undoing all our beautiful ugliness.

The *New York Times* recently reported, "Taking a page from the successful experiment in Iraq, American commanders and Afghan leaders are preparing to arm local militias to help in the fight against a resurgent Taliban." If one's idea of success is stumbling into never-ending entrapments that justify expanding one's branch of service, then the "experiment" is well worth repeating. In fact, "Son of the Surge" might enjoy a longer run than the original.

Then again, it's hard to justify buying \$2 billion stealth aircraft and nuclear submarines just to bomb Muslim weddings. So Gates, singing from the company sheet, is reprising bogeymen of yesterday. "Both Russia and China have increased their defense spending and modernization programs," he says, a warning that he neglects to put in context.

The CIA and other sources indicate that Russia and China's "increased" defense budgets are still at most only a tenth the size of ours. Some hawks insist that the Chinese spend more on arms than they admit, but the Chinese could hardly be lying more than we are. President Bush signed a \$512 billion defense bill for 2009; a plausible calculation says that when you include things like the security expenses of departments other than Defense and the costs of current and past wars, the tab will exceed \$1.4 trillion, more than half the total federal budget. So depending which way the truth ball bounces, we spend a half trillion to a trillion dollars more per year on defense than the Russians and Chinese combined.

An armada couldn't hold the amount of money Russia and China would have to spend to bring their forces to 21st-century standards. The Russians mustered

enough tanks to roll over Georgia; fortunately for them, they could have done the job with a flyswatter because the preponderance of the once vaunted Soviet arsenal is rusting or sinking. As to the quality of the gear Russia now makes, during sea trials in 2008, 20 sailors died of asphyxiation aboard Russia's newest nuclear submarine when the firefighting system malfunctioned. The safety system warning crewmembers might have saved them, but it malfunctioned, too. And China's war machine doesn't look profoundly different from the one that shot down William Holden in "The Bridges at Toko-Ri." The majority of its combat aircraft are based on 1950s and 1960s technology. As political scientists Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press noted in the March/April 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, America's nuclear primacy is bringing the era of Mutually Assured Destruction to an end.

The Russians learned their lesson about running with the U.S. in an arms race the hard way; they aren't foolish enough to seek a rematch. The Chinese had sufficient ancient wisdom to stay in the grandstand the first time around. In 2006, U.S. defense companies were responsible for 63 percent of world arms sales, and Western European firms accounted for 29 percent. Arms industries can't grow like magic beanstalks. Even if Russia and China wanted to acquire arsenals to match ours, they'd have to buy them from us.

It's hard to believe Gates is unaware of these things. Maybe his generals are keeping them from him, and he's too busy to look them up for himself. Whatever the case, he champions development of weapons even costlier and more fantastical than the ones we already have, like the new Next Generation Bomber that will replace our old next generation bomber, the next generation of aircraft carriers that will defend Taiwan from the Chinese as often as the last generation of aircraft carriers did, and a missile defense system

that, according to defense technology expert Dr. Richard Garwin, is "guaranteed" not to work.

Gates is a stunning exemplar of self-contradiction. Toward the end of his *Foreign Affairs* piece he writes, "We should be modest about what military force can accomplish and what technology can accomplish," yet in the very next sentence he says, "The advances in precision, sensor, information, and satellite technologies have led to extraordinary gains in what the U.S. military can do." He appears to be succeeding as secretary of defense through the honored bureaucratic technique known as "leadership à la carte." You take counsel from Senior Adviser A, adopt proposals from Senior Adviser B, turn a blind eye to the shenanigans of Senior Adviser C, and, voilà, you've got a program nobody can deconstruct because everyone is as baffled by it as you are.

But it's the quote in the closing paragraph of his article that tells you whose orders Gates is really following: "What seems to work best [in world affairs] is the possession by those states who wish to preserve the peace of the preponderant power and of the will to accept the burdens and responsibilities required to achieve that purpose." The author of that not altogether cogent statement is Donald Kagan, a central member of the neoconservative think tank that framed George W. Bush's Iraq policy and father of surge architect Frederick Kagan.

Assuming Barack Obama was serious about effecting change in U.S. foreign policy, he could hardly have made a bigger mistake than keeping Robert Gates on as secretary of defense. ■

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Up From Conservatism

America needs a better Right than the GOP can provide.

By Reid Buckley

WAY BACK IN THE EARLY 1950s, when I was in my twenties, a favorite pastime was to take the first sentence of that day's lead editorial in the *New York Times* and, putting the newspaper aside, deduce the rest of the commentary. If I was unable to draw that deduction from the first sentence, I went to the second sentence. If I failed again, I betook myself outside and chopped half a cord of wood in expiation of my obtuseness.

The acceptable thinking of those days—the conventional wisdom; the Walter Lippmanesque by way of Ed Murrow liberal cant—was so predictable that it was easy, young and callow as I was, to anticipate at breakfast what that evening, at cocktails, the earnest pillars of society in my flossy northwestern Connecticut town would be pontificating. They seemed all to have graduated from Princeton or Dartmouth, from Smith or Vassar or Sarah Lawrence. They wore Bendels and Bergdorf. The pearl necklace and the regimental striped tie were their signatures. Oh, their solemnity! How avid their desire to be respectable. They could oooh and aaah over a Picasso yet fail to gain a single insight into the evils of modernity. They could listen to the Fifth Symphony of Shostakovich and learn nothing about Joe Stalin. I fled to Spain.

This is what I fear establishment thinking among conservatives is becoming. Dull. Derivative. Predictable. Lacking in zip and sting and mordancy—in the agenbite of inwit. And sometimes also emptied of libertarian principle.

We conservatives have our own *New York Times*, our own cathedral of acceptable right-wing wisdom, the *Wall Street Journal*. Paul Gigot is the latest in a distinguished line of chief editorial writers, and he is almost always informative. During the dispiriting demarche of the George W. Bush administration, moreover, he displayed the sterling virtue of holding the feet of Republicans in the Congress to the fire of conservative principles, which that unprincipled breed of nincompoops didn't enjoy, and for which they paid in 2008. But scanning the editorial pages of the *WSJ* or papers from the several erudite conservative and libertarian fonts, I often feel that I can play the old game: I can foretell from the first couple of sentences where that editorial or op-ed or conservative think-tank essay is going—what tried and true and trite right-wing lessons can be gleaned from it. Reading the *National Review* and *American Spectator* issues on the electoral defeat this past fall impresses one with how so many good, well-meaning, and intelligent commentators are able to miss the point.

I cry within myself, where is the inspiration? Where is the audacity? And I wonder often whether the young radical today reading conservative publications does not suffer from the tedium that suffocated me as a young man reading the liberal press.

Tell me quickly: what is new in conservative political thinking since 1955? Can you come up with a single tenet that rises fresh to the mind in treating vicissitudes that were undreamed of back when my

brother founded *National Review*—the worldwide torrent of the Internet, bursting through ethnic, national, and ideological barriers, maybe reducing all philosophies of government to chauvinism; or the impact of economic globalization, which snatches some Third World peoples from penury but as suddenly dumps them back into it; or the acceptance of infanticide and euthanasia by a majority of the American people, upon whom, according to populist conservative creed—descending from Ronald Reagan, intoned from all platforms—we conservatives exhort ourselves to depend; or the religious and imperial irredentist menace of Islamic terrorism, which threatens a 100-year war of civilizations? What have conservatives to hurl at these urgent historic challenges other than the same bromides? For 40 years, smug, snide right-wingers have made merry mocking Greenpeace fanatics and ecological doomsayers without learning a blessed thing about the precariousness of the ecology and the effect of human action (not to speak of avarice) on it, as when we promiscuously exfoliate the rain forests or condemn yet one more green acre on the southeastern shore of New Jersey to the desolation of heedless urban development. We conservatives are so self-satisfied that we have incapacitated ourselves from peering beneath the antics of idiots and the wild exaggerations of scruffy environmentalist kooks to the gathering of real dangers that their hysterical rhetoric obscures. The climate is most probably changing, and the human impact on it should be studied.

When last did you hear a conservative spokesman deplore yet another six-lane highway, yet another fast-food alley, yet another graceless subdivision, yet another Super Wal-Mart or Lowe's that sucks the life out of small village businesses, yet one more onslaught against neighborhood and nature that is masked under the name of progress? Unless it is a bridge in Alaska from nowhere to nowhere, you will not hear the deepest red-dyed congressman denounce the progressive uglification of our natural inheritance, as though beauty is of no concern. Have you flown recently from Newport News to Boston at 25,000 feet on a clear day and gazed down upon the horror of American civilization? What man hath wrought! What we have done to this beautiful land? Dear God, forgive us! But when last did you hear a conservative oppose a new mall because it is ugly, an affront to the eye, accustoming thousands of human beings to dehumanizing blows against the aesthetic sense until it is benumbed? The good, the true, and the beautiful are inseparably joined. One cannot damage one without doing harm to the others. Those who fail to comprehend this are morally in error on the dialectical front, though they may be personally virtuous.

Not all development is bad, not all logging is reprehensible, and some eyesores cannot be avoided. Industrialization, which provides surcease from want, can neither be stopped nor should it be. But within the hysteria and exaggeration of political activists, mostly of the Left, too often supported by cooked science, there is often a kernel of legitimate concern, be it economical, sociological, aesthetic, or environmental. We conservatives have shut our ears.

How stupid. Full 480 moons have my brother James and I bemoaned this cretinous yet apparently incurable knee-jerk conservative response to abuses of nature, real or alleged. Indifference to

environmental damage is not only saddening, it's a deplorable exhibition of urban-bred removal from reality. This should be our cause, for pity's sake, not theirs. Too many conservative solons were city-born, methinks, and would be terrified to spend a single night in the wilds of Central Park, where a screech owl might whistle at them.

On most of the political issues, George Will makes one think. My brother Bill's columns were classically inquisitive and inimitably analytical. Bob Tyrrell and P.J. O'Rourke are puckish. Ann Coulter is our very own Shirley MacLaine in terms of wackiness (though not quite so weird). Yet have we not slipped behind the phenomenology of the postmodern, post-Christian world?

Are we not perhaps talking too much to ourselves? Are we not writing too much for the applause of our fellows? Is any of us—with few exceptions—saying anything that we have not heard before, and are we not—all of us—submitting intellectually to conservative political correctness and the inertia of the modern super state?

Perhaps I have been living too long as a semi-recluse in the rural South. Maybe I spend too much time on my tractor. I am a temperamental maverick—which can also be boring and is often a cheap, posturing, faux-cynical attitude. But I become ill at ease when anything I may say is politely received. I am not proposing that 21st-century conservatives be clinically half mad, like Mr. Dean or doddering Mr. Byrd of West Virginia or the several unforgettable conservatives of the past whom I was lucky to know—say Fritz Wilhelmsen, of the weeping left eye and the radical, impious, universal intelligence, or Willmoore Kendall, who never lost a polemic but could not keep a friend. In their lunacy, there was a rare precious brilliance. Nor am I suggesting that conservatives must once again be deemed by society as uncouth, though I

feel that it ill-becomes true conservative independence of spirit to feel comfortable in the Rose Garden, in the private chambers of the speaker of the House, in a big corporation boardroom, in dining rooms where finger bowls are served before dessert, or in any other center of establishmentarian power and complacency.

Please understand me, I am not holding that there is a Euclidian equivalency between boorishness and independence of mind, between the social outcast and genius. But the persecuted Church is oft the true Church. The worldly Church is too often the corrupted Church.

So with the conservative movement. We must ask ourselves: is there in the thousands upon thousands of pages of conservative scholarship being ground out every year sufficient original critical thinking about conservative premises, conservative social and political principles?

I am not asking this question rhetorically. I don't know the answer. What is certain is that I do not find the post-Reagan/Buckley revelatory iconoclastic vision I seek in the pages of any conservative journal today, though I glimpse snatches of it in a Daniel Henninger or a Charles Krauthammer, and I am deeply respectful of such as Michael Novak and Roger Scruton. Charles Murray possesses a rare original mind, but we cannot claim him as our own—would that we could. Has there been published in conservative literature a single scholarly tome as provocative as Brent Bozell's essay in *National Review* over 40 years ago on the tension between virtue and liberty, an ideological dilemma that has never been bridged, but only, under the Soviet threat during the Cold War, glossed in the interest of unity? (Bozell's famous essay was, in essence, a carefully reasoned restatement of Plato's dictum that money does not come from virtue, but from virtue comes money and every other good of

man, including personal freedom. The sole justification for freedom, in Bozell's view, is that freedom permits human beings to act virtuously in the sight of God, to do God's will, not theirs. In those early days of the renaissance of the conservative movement, when all allies were precious—and a precious few—this reasoning put him at odds with libertarian conservatives and was thus, for its divisiveness, respectfully read though not pursued. But the argument has been vindicated by the solipsistic permissiveness of the sexual revolution of the New Left under the aegis of libertarianism.)

I wonder—I am nagged by the doubt—has the disheartening failure of the conservative movement on the domestic front, dating from the second Reagan administration, been anywhere sufficiently acknowledged or analyzed by our great conservative institutions of scholarly learning? Has sodomy become the groovy kinkiness in our society? Is prayer ever to be restored to our schools? Are the unborn in America never to be safeguarded? And our infirm or derelict elderly—are they now to be at the mercy of the avariciousness of their heirs or the parsimony of the state? Will ever an amendment to the Constitution win through defining the Republic now and forever as Christian bred and born and deliberately affirmed at the founding, putting the quietus to secularists, who seek to desecralize society as well as life?

Recall heroic General Armistead pinning his hat on the tip of his sword and—thrusting the blade high, yelling to his brave men to follow—charging through the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, at once to fall mortally wounded. That's been called the high-water mark of the Confederacy. Did the high-water mark of the 20th-century conservative movement of the United States take place back in December 1995/January 1996 when—in what might as well have been a railroad car's tobacco-sodden

Intelligence analysts are concerned that blowback from the fighting in Gaza could weaken the governments of key allies in the Arab world,

including Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia and lead to greater regional instability. U.S. communications monitors have noted increased dialogue and even collaboration between Sunni radicals throughout the region and Hamas and Hezbollah, both of whom are supported by Iran. Egypt, since it is a frontline state in the conflict by virtue of its control of Gaza's southern border crossings into Sinai, has been most affected. Popular sentiment strongly supports the Palestinians, but the Cairo government is hostile to Hamas and Hezbollah because of their links with Tehran. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit condemned Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah's call for mass demonstrations in Egypt in very undiplomatic language, warning that "Egyptian armed forces are tasked with defending Egypt. If need be, they will also protect Egypt against people like you." Nasrallah had urged Egyptians to take to the streets "in millions" to force the government to open the Rafah crossing, a border with Gaza, noting that security forces could not stop so many protesters. The appeal sent shivers up a number of spines in Cairo, where fear of a revival of a populist militant movement similar to the Muslim Brotherhood of the 1990s is the number-one concern.



Secret French government reports predict that the current economic meltdown could bring about a revival of Europe-wide extreme left-wing terrorism,

including the sabotage of vital infrastructure, kidnappings of government officials and top businessmen, and random bomb attacks. The government commissioned the reports in the wake of recent riots in Athens, which were spearheaded by anarchist and extreme leftist groups. Analysis by the French domestic intelligence service indicates considerable radicalization among well-educated young people who have been unable to find work in Europe's flagging economy but who have adequate resources to travel throughout the continent and network. The environment is similar to that of the 1970s and 1980s when Action Directe carried out more than 50 attacks in France. At that time, the Baader-Meinhof gang also bombed, kidnapped, and assassinated in Germany, and Italy's Red Brigades abducted and killed a former prime minister. European intelligence agencies have identified operational links among activists in France, Italy, Greece, Germany, and the UK, including detailed planning on the Internet. The violence in Athens demonstrated how a small group of activists could exploit legitimate grievances among young people and bring a city of 4 million to its knees. Flyers passed out on Paris streets in the wake of Athens called on students to follow the example of their Greek counterparts. The intelligence concludes that the alienation of young people in France is largely due to changes in labor laws in 2006 to ease restrictions on hiring and firing employees, making it more difficult for recent graduates to obtain secure positions in the workforce.

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men's room, among the cuspidors—squat, puffy Newt Gingrich stonewalled smooth, sleazy Bill Clinton?

Judging from the political deportment of the Republican Congresses and the White House in domestic matters since that time, has anyone had the audacity, courage, and honesty to tell the bald truth—which is that the Republican Party has failed the cause to which my brother Bill and so many other brilliant souls—Frank Meyer, Jim Burnham, John Chamberlain, to mention just a few—gave unstintingly of their lives? Is any establishment conservative organ today declaring unequivocally that conservatives who have any respect at all for the political philosophy they profess must forswear the Republican Party and on many major issues break ranks with government-trusting (and agnostic) neo-cons? Or is that fresh young mind this minute deciding that whatever the right wing says about anything is tired polemics from which candor and the imagination have long since leaked out?

When I ponder the future of American culture, I wonder, first, whether in the future there will ever again be respect for truth in this Republic or whether we conservatives, like the vainglorious Greeks 2,500 years ago, are so tainted intellectually and corrupted philosophically that we have lost the capacity for critical thinking about ourselves, relying on euphemisms in place of truth.

Today we are trespassing on vital conservative and libertarian tenets without compunction. Here are three.

1. We Americans have turned our backs on the founding ideal of small government. The polecat is out of the bag: charming neocon Fred Barnes published a book candidly calling George W. Bush a “big government” conservative. With the president's blessing, Republicans in the hallowed halls of Congress fattened a monster state and empowered it at every

turn without pausing to consider whither we are going, what we are doing, or what the consequences may be to the Republic down the road. Democrats have now succeeded on a platform that leans ever more toward the corporate state. Must we not ask ourselves: is small government out of date? Is that battle lost to the tides of historical forces and to the rampant march of technology?

2. Though reluctant, Republicans have submitted to the takeover of the economy by the federal government, a foray into the corporate state from which we may never recover. Yet to my knowledge no conservative voice has articulated the ringing indictment that such highhanded action merits, and the American people have submitted meekly. As I write, events on this front are raging more quickly than inflation can destroy an economy.

3. Putative conservatives in the White House and in the Republican Congress plunged the country further into debt through legislation such as the farm bill and the new Medicare entitlement paying for prescription drugs, in the meantime bowing to the perpetuation of established entitlements. Yet no conservative voice was raised to bring up first principles by showing why Social Security *et al.* are inimical to the rationale for republican government and must be phased out or subjected to radical reform. Many conservative voices have written scathingly about the financial woes of the present Social Security administration—which are apocalyptic—but to my knowledge none has yet proposed that Republicans abandon the New Deal-era concept all together.

In my opinion, such candor is necessary. It may be understandable—no less disgusting—that our politicians do not have the stomach for it. But independent conservative intellectuals are keepers of the flame or they are burnt cartridges. It

is insufficient that our conservative organs and think tanks denounce the fiscal lunacies of Social Security while never explicitly grounding themselves in political science, never declaring that we must abolish Social Security as it is currently conceived. *Tant pis*. One has to suppose they are afraid of sounding anachronistic, of talking themselves into irrelevance, of being disparaged as freaks from the lunatic fringe. But that prudence, that tactical wisdom, seductive as it may be perceived, submits without a fight to the accommodationist politics of the Nelson Rockefeller/Dwight Eisenhower GOP of the 1950s and '60s. Those politics are every bit as craven, mistaken, defeatist, and unworthy today as they were back then. My brother's *National Review* was born to stand athwart history, not to tickle the teats of the belly of the beast Leviathan as it strides over us.

On the political level, then, what will be the future of American civilization as far as we conservatives are concerned? Why, of knaves and charlatans on both sides of the aisle driving the Republic headlong into a metastatic colossus of a state in which the citizen has been reduced to a hapless serf; in which blunt, honest language has been euphemized out of existence; and in which a bland and servile acceptance of the inevitability of Big Brother is the received wisdom.

Where are our Friedrich Hayeks of *The Road to Serfdom*, our Eric Voegelins of *The New Science of Politics*, our Russell Kirks of *The Conservative Mind*? Where is our philosopher? Meantime, on the practical front, what can conservatives do? The very first thing is to dissociate from the Republican Party, which has become an albatross around the neck of integrity. ■

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Blue Dogs Bite

Can Bush Democrats and progressives get along?

By Jordan Michael Smith

DESPITE A BRUISING primary, Democrats swiftly resolved their differences. On the eve of the Denver convention, *Time* magazine called the party “more united than perhaps at any other point in the last 30 years.” After Barack Obama’s election and the party’s decisive wins in House and Senate, which followed 2006 midterm victories, the Democrats appear to have overcome the internecine battles that so bedeviled them in the past.

But multiple divisions lurk below the surface. Far from being a model of partisan single-mindedness, the party of Obama suffers deep differences. It is only a matter of time before a contentious issue or antagonistic caucus member punctures the superficial harmony. The economic stimulus package, unions’ mandatory card checks, Iraq withdrawal—these matters could reveal the fissures that divide Democrat from Democrat.

No split is more striking than the one between Blue Dogs and liberals. The former are the offspring of the “Yellow Dog Democrats,” conservative Southern Democrats in the first half of the 20th century who were so devoted to the party, it was said, they would sooner vote for a yellow dog than for a Republican.

As the party gradually embraced civil rights following World War II, however, many of these conservative Democrats became Republicans. By the 1994 midterm elections, said former Texas Democratic Rep. Pete Geren, the remaining yellow dogs had been “choked blue” by the left wing of the party, gradually abandoning their moderation. Conservative

Democrats seized on Geren’s quip and formed the Congressional Blue Dog Caucus in 1995.

The group forms the moderate to conservative wing of the party, often voting with Republicans. (Liberals deride them as “Bush Dogs” for this reason.) Members often come from swing districts where being classified as a liberal is electoral suicide. Blue Dogs frequently defy Democratic orthodoxy on abortion, stem-cell research, national security and gay marriage. The only policy the coalition is unanimously committed to is fiscal responsibility.

The year of the Blue Dogs’ formation, not coincidentally, was the year after the midterm election in which a stunning 54 seats swung from Democratic to Republican hands, giving the GOP a House majority for the first time in 40 years. Depending on whom you ask, the Blue Dog coalition was founded either opportunistically in opposition to an unpopular Democratic president or nobly in opposition to the party’s liberal wing, which had forced a centrist Clinton into unwise battles on gays in the military and universal health-care. In either case, the 1994 loss was the catalyst for centrist House Democrats to band together. As University of California political scientist Martin Wattenberg put it, “One of the great constraints on any president is the short political memory of members of the House of Representatives. Facing election every two years, their time perspective is necessarily different from the president’s. To them, each election result must be compared to that of just two years before.”

The Blue Dogs grew in influence, emerging after the Democratic victories in 2006 as arguably the most important faction in the House. And with many coalition members having campaigned explicitly against the party in November, they are not indebted to Barack Obama in traditional coattail-riding ways. Former co-chair Mike Ross (Ark.), sounded downright combative when he told *USA Today* that he hopes that Obama “recognizes the clout and the voting power of the Blue Dog coalition.”

Ross didn’t exaggerate his caucus’ influence. In the beginning of October, Obama phoned him personally, as well as his fellow Blue Dogs John Tanner (Tenn.) and Allen Boyd (Fla.). “He wanted to work with us,” Ross said. “He also recognized that we had the numbers to block or clear legislation.” Jason Furman, Obama’s economic policy adviser, held his own talks with the Blue Dogs and pledged that Obama would seek to establish “a government unified around the concept of fiscal discipline and centered around the pay-go rule. Insisting on paying for things will lead to better economic policy.” (The pay-as-you-go rule—which requires new mandatory spending and tax cuts to be fully offset in an effort not to increase the deficit—was adopted by the House and Senate in early 2007, though it can easily be waived, as it has been several times over the past two years.)

But the demands of the economic crisis will probably intrude on the Obama-Blue Dog love-in. Paul Krugman, who is in communication with the

Obama administration regarding the economy, told the National Press Club in December that a stimulus package of \$850 billion over two years—a price tag the Obama administration has reportedly been considering—would be inadequate. Krugman instead argued for more than \$1 trillion in less than two years.

It is difficult to imagine the Blue Dogs agreeing to such a sum without extracting concessions. While progressive lawmakers toss around staggering figures, these conservative Democrats continue to make the case for fiscal austerity. Co-chair for policy Baron Hill (Ind.) said that the Blue Dogs recognize that there will be some deficit spending, but “along with that we have to chart a course that makes us fiscally responsible somewhere down the line.”

His caucus holds many cards. “The Blue Dogs without a doubt are the strongest faction in Congress,” says Steven Nider, an adjunct fellow at the American Security Project and a former staffer at the Democratic Leadership Council. “And in this election they were strengthened. Simply put, more of them were elected.” The coalition grew by 10 members to 59 in November, just under 15 percent of House membership.

Indeed, the Democratic caucus expanded by 21 in November, meaning nearly half of the new party membership is Blue Dog. Many “blue pups,” as new coalition members are called, campaigned in direct opposition to Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid. Maryland’s Frank Cratovil, for instance, running in a longtime Republican seat, emphasized his independence and Republican friends. “What’s the worst that can happen if you vote against the majority of your party? What’s the worst that can happen?” he asked constituents.

One of Cratovil’s television ads even avoided mentioning that he was a Democrat, touting him twice as “independent,” obviously hoping voters

would think of him as an independent. Cratovil promised to “cut wasteful spending, free us from Mideastern oil, crack down on illegal immigration, and always protect the bay.” Not exactly a liberal wishlist. Another ad called “Stand Up” echoed John McCain’s tagline from his convention speech. As the *New Republic*’s Eve Fairbanks wrote in October, “[T]he Democrats are poised to expand their House majority—but by electing conservative Democrats who, in some cases, have ideologically more in common with John McCain than with Nancy Pelosi. These conservative Democrats—many of whose districts will vote McCain—won’t feel that they owe Obama, will be well-organized as a faction under the ‘Blue Dog’ banner, and, if their actions in the 110th are any indicator, won’t shirk from bucking their party’s leadership.”

“THE BLUE DOGS CAN STOP ANY BILL THEY WANT TO,” SAYS JEFF GREENE.

Moreover, it’s difficult to see how coalitions can be built to bypass the Blue Dogs. House Republican leadership is more conservative in the 111th Congress, according to analysis by Duke University political scientist Michael C. Brady. Moderates like House GOP Whip Roy Blunt (Mo.) and Conference Chairman Adam Putnam (Fla.) were replaced by Eric Cantor (Va.) and Mike Pence (Ind.), the latter among the most conservative politicians in the country. This leadership will pressure Republican members to avoid any compromises that would further strengthen the Obama-Pelosi agenda.

The Blue Dogs are not in a position to craft their own agenda based on fiscal discipline, but they may not have to. “The Blue Dogs can stop any bill they want to,” says Jeff Greene, a former House subcommittee staff director. “They have the numbers to be as

obstructionist as they want, and it makes sense for them to come out full strength and then be more conciliatory later if they want to.”

After a Treasury report released in December showed the government’s unfunded liabilities at roughly \$56 trillion, up \$3 trillion from 2007, Blue Dog Jim Cooper (Tenn.), senior Democrat on the all-important House Budget Committee, said he wanted a commission to address the nation’s long-term insolvency. Blue Dog-friendly Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) endorsed the idea, but Pelosi remained conspicuously silent. Cooper is sure that will change: “Once she sees this report and sees that, at a minimum, the deficit last year was \$1 trillion, and if you take a broader measure it’s closer to \$3 trillion, I think that would make it more likely that she would endorse a commission or summit approach.”

Democrats have faith that Obama can overcome the progressive-Blue Dog divide. “Obama has a clearer mandate than Clinton—Clinton never got more than 50 percent of the vote,” says Scott Lilly, a longtime senior House aide, now with the Center for American Progress. “There is far better communication between the centrists and the liberals than there was, and Obama will be able to use that.” agrees Nider, who says Obama’s successful campaign will pressure Democrats to unite around the president. But if Obama dips in popularity, or the Blue Dogs decide they won’t budge on some legislation, then the Democrats might find majority status every bit as frustrating as being out of power. ■

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A Scholar & a Gentleman

Remembering Samuel Huntington

By Michael C. Desch

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON died on Christmas Eve at age 81 after a long and slow decline. We have lost not only an astute public intellectual but a fine man. Fortunately, he left a rich legacy: pathbreaking scholarship in all four subfields of political science and a community of scholars whose careers he generously nurtured.

A graduate of Yale at 18 who began a 58-year Harvard teaching career at just 23, he went on to write, co-write, or edit 17 books—the last of which was translated into 39 languages. Considering the peaks he reached, it is hard to believe that Sam ever suffered professional setbacks. But the controversy surrounding his first book, *The Soldier and the State*, now in its 15th printing, initially cost him tenure at Harvard.

When that work came out in 1957, the first notices were negative, largely because of the final few pages in which Huntington unflatteringly contrasted the ramshackle town of Highland Falls, New York with its scrubbed and orderly neighbor, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His admiration for the latter did not escape liberal reviewers, who thought they detected the odor of fascism. The young professor was convicted of one of the few capital offenses in Cambridge—being conservative—and temporarily exiled to Columbia. This pattern would characterize the rest of his career: initial rejection followed by grudging acceptance as the power of his ideas prevailed.

Sam was an unusual conservative by today's absolute standards, which tend toward doctrinaire defense of democ-

racy and free markets. His conservatism was instead a presumption in favor of established political and economic orders. On the occasion of Sam's retirement as director of Harvard's Center for International Affairs, his friend Eric Nordlinger suggested that Sam's favorite philosopher was Edmund Burke. With characteristic modesty, Sam pooh-poohed any association with such a highfalutin thinker. When I subsequently read Huntington's 1957 essay "Conservatism as an Ideology," however, I realized that Nordlinger had identified the reason behind Sam's abiding concern for political order as an essential prerequisite to liberty.

Burkean as he was in his skepticism of radical change, Sam's greatest theoretical influence came from the Left: his Harvard colleague Louis Hartz. In *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Hartz argued that the U.S. was a thoroughly liberal society, deeply committed to Lockean principles of democracy and individual freedom. But unlike Europe, where liberalism confronted real ideological challenges from both Left and Right and had to adapt in an ideologically diverse environment, in the New World liberalism had adopted a messianic strain that was at once utopian in its desire to remake the planet and paranoid in the face of nonliberal ideologies and institutions.

Sam's argument in "Conservatism as an Ideology" was that a conservative living in a liberal society would be compelled to defend its values and institutions. Following Hartz's argument

about the contradictions of American liberalism, part of this defense involves a candid recognition that America's liberal tradition is weak precisely because it lacks a real conservative alternative. Hence, to preserve the best of American liberalism, with which he always identified, Sam became a particular type of conservative—one committed to conserving but also to refining liberalism, checking its excesses by offering a conservative alternative.

It is true that during the 1970s Sam found common cause with some of the first-generation neoconservatives, particularly his old friend Daniel Patrick Moynihan. This association was consistent with his "positional conservatism," as his former student and coauthor Dick Betts characterizes it, in that these conservative Democrats were standing up for the New Deal against the challenge posed by the New Left and other radicals. Sam was nonetheless a lifelong Democrat (with only a few lapses), having met Nancy, his wife of 51 years, when the two were working for Adlai Stevenson in 1952.

He had less sympathy for today's neoconservatives, not just because they pushed for what he regarded as an ill-advised war with Iraq. As the University of Chicago's John Mearsheimer, twice a fellow at Harvard, explains, "Sam was—above all else—an American nationalist who was deeply worried in his later years by both transnational elites and hyphenated Americans with a deep attachment to a foreign country. The neoconservatives, of course, have a pas-

sionate attachment to Israel. I know from conversations with him that he thought that this was not in the American national interest, and it worried him a lot." Sam thought that the rise of Hyphen Man and Davos Man—a term he coined referring to the yearly gathering of the global elite in Switzerland—made it harder to formulate a foreign policy that served America's interests.

The key to Sam's success as a public intellectual was that he asked big questions and gave contrarian answers. A few years ago, over dinner with Sam and Nancy on Martha's Vineyard, my wife asked how he decided what to write about. Sam answered that he looked for important, real-world problems—the relationship of the military professional to the democratic politician; the problems that arise when political participation outstrips the institutional capacity of a state; the gap between the promise and the reality of democracy; the roots of the spread of democracy around the world in the 1970s and 80s; the increasing roles of religious and ethnic identities in the post-Cold War world—and then tried to make sense of them in a systematic way. Unlike most academics' unerring sense of the capillary, Sam had a nose for timely and important issues. Since America is a thoroughly liberal country, anyone who takes positions outside the Hartzian consensus, as he frequently did, is bound to attract a lot of attention.

His appearance could be deceiving. I first saw him in the mid-1980s when he spoke at a seminar series organized by University of Chicago sociologist Morris Janowitz, whose *Professional Soldier* was the ying to Huntington's yang in the field of civil-military relations. Having read snippets of *The Soldier and the State's* muscular prose, I imagined Sam to be a large, barrel-chested man, an academic John Wayne coming to shoot it out with his intellectual rival. Imagine my

surprise when a slight man with a nasal voice, who spoke in the cadences of a high-church Episcopalian cleric, stepped to the podium. I would learn that Sam's was a different type of strength.

He was not easy to get to know. When I went to Harvard as a postdoctoral fellow, Sam initially seemed inscrutable. Another fellow and I discovered that we had both been weighing our chances of being renewed for a second year by how Sam reacted when we saw him in the hall each morning. When he greeted us by name, we thought we were shoo-ins. More often he just mumbled in our direction and we despaired of a second year. Of course, neither was indicative of what Sam thought of us; how he acknowledged us was just a function of whether we had caught him when he was busy, which was most of the time.

Working with Sam was daunting because he was so good at so many things, as I learned when I returned a few years later to his new John M. Olin Institute of Strategic Studies. I recall one assistant spending an entire week trying to make sense of the many financial accounts that sustained the institute's various activities. Sam patiently listened to her report and then pointed out that she had overlooked a grant that no one had used for nine years but in which there remained \$2,150. He was right to the penny without ever having consulted a spreadsheet.

That administrative acumen is even more impressive given that while he was running the institute, Sam was simultaneously teaching and writing bestselling books like *The Clash of Civilizations*, almost as if the various compartments of his mind had on/off switches.

But given all of his accomplishments, Sam remained strikingly modest. He rarely talked about his own work and was more often content to listen to others. One of the high points of his week was the Olin Institute's Tuesday

lunch seminar in which fellows or visitors presented research in progress and then defended it in vigorous debate, often led by Sam himself.

He was extremely supportive of his students, and they repaid his favor with fierce loyalty and deep affection. In addition to Betts, some of the more prominent include James Kurth of Swarthmore, Donald Horowitz at Duke, Eliot Cohen of SAIS, Stephen Rosen of Harvard, Steven David of Johns Hopkins, Francis Fukuyama of SAIS, Scott Sagan at Stanford, Aaron Freidberg at Princeton, Peter Feaver of Duke, Minxin Pei at Carnegie, Fareed Zakaria of *Newsweek*, and Gideon Rose of *Foreign Affairs*.

But Sam was broadminded. The list of scholars who were not his students, but whom he nonetheless took under his wing, constitutes a who's who of leading thinkers of international relations and comparative politics. They include, Mearsheimer, Jack Snyder at Columbia, Barry Posen at MIT, Tom Christensen at Princeton, and Stephen Walt at the Kennedy School, among many others. Some of these beneficiaries of Sam's largesse were ideologically and intellectually close to him, others were not. It didn't matter. He respected those whom he thought were trying, as he was, to understand the weighty issues of the day in a rigorous yet relevant way.

There remain many insightful American thinkers, but few rival Sam Huntington in breadth and depth. And though many are decent, none manages to combine a great mind and a large heart as masterfully as Sam did. We will miss him. ■

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Ecumenical Revolutionary

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, one of the leading Catholic public intellectuals in America, parish priest, and editor of the religion and culture journal *First Things*, died

Jan. 8 at the age of 72. The author of several books of cultural and theological reflection, the most famous of which was *The Naked Public Square*, Neuhaus represented the religious conservative reaction to the cultural revolution of the 1960s and '70s. In his turn away from modern liberalism, his intellectual and political evolution mirrored that of millions of Americans who came to identify with conservatism and an agenda of reversing the excesses of the cultural Left. As a strong proponent of preserving, or in many cases restoring, the place of religion in public life, Neuhaus cultivated an ecumenical alliance that sought to undergird politics with a transcendent vision of order, which he came to believe was best expressed in Catholicism. A convert to the Catholic Church in 1990, Neuhaus was a passionate defender of the right to life throughout his career, though in his last decade he became a reliable booster of the destructive foreign policy of his neoconservative allies.

A civil-rights activist and Vietnam War opponent during his time as a Lutheran minister, Neuhaus was alienated by liberalized abortion laws from what he regarded as a different, second liberalism, a movement at odds with the liberal tradition. In a May 1997 *First Things* essay, "The Liberalism of John Paul II," he wrote, "By 1967 I was writing about the 'two liberalisms'—one, like the earlier civil rights movement, inclusive of the vulnerable and driven by a transcendent order of justice, the other exclusive and recognizing no law higher than indi-

vidual willfulness." As Neuhaus understood it, he had broken with modern liberalism to try to save the inclusive liberal tradition in America. He considered this to be the proper role of American conservatism.

Following the public split between his Center for Religion & Society and The Rockford Institute in 1989, an episode that Neuhaus and his defenders consistently misrepresented and used as an excuse to defame the staff of *Chronicles*, Neuhaus founded *First Things*. It was in those pages, particularly in his lengthy, broad-ranging commentary called "The Public Square," that Neuhaus advanced his arguments for the return of religion to public life. He proposed a symbiotic accommodation between Christianity and a liberal political order in which the former was necessary to sustain the latter.

Like many of his neoconservative friends, as well as many conservative Protestants and Catholics, Neuhaus remained a political liberal repelled by the rise of cultural liberalism. His basic liberal assumptions made charges that he and his fellow "theoconservatives" wished to establish a theocracy seem ridiculous.

In a 1996 *First Things* symposium, Neuhaus and his contributors entertained the possibility that the legalization of a grave moral evil in abortion, and particularly the antidemocratic nature of its imposition, might constitute grounds for considering the American "regime" illegitimate. In themselves, the symposium's strong pro-life

arguments and hostility to judicial tyranny were unremarkable in the context of 1990s culture-war debates. Questioning the legitimacy of the government and raising the specter of withdrawing consent from it over a question of moral principle—fundamentally liberal, contractarian arguments—was too much for several neoconservative members of the *First Things* board, who resigned in protest.

It became necessary to distinguish between the largely secular neoconservatives who objected to the symposium and the religious neoconservatives who defended it. The catchy but misleading neologism "theocon" was born. But the upshot of the controversy was that the theocons dropped any hint of radical critique of the government and became once again reliable neocon allies, as subsequent debates over the justice of the Iraq War would make clear. Far from posing the threat of a theocratic takeover of the country, as Neuhaus's former colleague Damon Linker hallucinated in *The Theocons*, Neuhaus and his fellows proved to be predictable apologists for the very secular policies of the Bush administration, which were notable neither for their attention to claims of transcendent justice nor for their respect for the dignity of the human person.

At his best in his pastoral role and in his meditations on religious life and the evils of the culture of death, Neuhaus deserves high praise. But he disappointed many of us who appreciated his intellect and erudition by failing to speak out against the Bush administration's crimes. Instead, he and his journal provided moral cover for policies that were clearly hostile to the first things that Neuhaus championed. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Slumdog Millionaire*]

Dickens in Bombay

By Steve Sailer

AFTER SWEEPING the Golden Globe awards, “*Slumdog Millionaire*,” the plucky movie about an uneducated underdog from the slums of Bombay who wins 20 million rupees on the local version of the quiz show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” has become the Oscar race overdog.

Seven-year-old Jamal and his older brother Salim are orphaned in 1992 when Hindu nationalist mobs torch their Muslim slum in Bombay—or “Mumbai,” as the Shiv Sena politicians who fomented these pogroms renamed the city in 1996. Although trendy Westerners all use “Mumbai” now, no locals call their famous film industry “Mollywood.”

In their Dickensian struggle to survive, the brothers, along with a pretty foundling girl named Latika, scavenge in a vast garbage dump. They are lured away to an “orphanage” run by a Fagin-like impresario of child beggars who blinds his best prospects to make them more pitiable. Fortunately, our heroes escape to peddle snacks on India’s famous trains and guide gullible Western tourists around the Taj Mahal. As adolescents, they finally make it back to Bombay. Salim becomes a hit man, while Jamal sticks to humble but honest work.

Six years of economic growth later, Jamal, now delivering tea in an outsourced call center, finds Latika enslaved as the moll of his brother’s mob boss. (I suspect this plot twist was hoary when Jimmy Cagney was young.) To make enough money to run off with his beloved, Jamal goes on “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.” There, as fate, karma, or kismet would have it, he finds he knows the answer to each trivia question because it had come up at a memorably dramatic moment in his life.

Jamal’s run of good fortune entrances India, but the evil game show host, who resembles a subcontinental version of comedian Dennis Miller, doesn’t care about his booming ratings. Before the final round, he has Jamal arrested and tortured to find out how he’s cheating. By recounting his life in flashback, Jamal convinces the police captain of his true-heartedness and returns for the final showdown question.

Unfortunately, “*Slumdog*’s” success in the year-end awards largely reflects a lack of competition. The film contains, in theory, most of the elements of a crowd pleaser, but the actual product turns out to be less enjoyable to watch than a good episode of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.”

One problem is aesthetic. The specialty of eclectic British director Danny Boyle is cranking the kinetic energy onscreen up to 11. He revitalized the zombie genre with “28 Days Later” by having the rotting undead sprint after their terrified prey like Usain Bolt. Granted, turbocharging dilapidated zombies didn’t make much sense, but it was exciting. Similarly, Boyle’s directorial razzmatazz made a young lad’s life in an English exurb look exciting in the underrated “*Millions*.”

Bombay, however, doesn’t need to be juiced with the latest video fads. As Salman Rushdie has noted, Indian cities induce sensory overload (most famously conveyed by the bravura opening chapter of Kipling’s *Kim*). A more stately approach, such as David Lean’s in “A Passage to India,” would have been more watchable. Boyle comes up with one useful innovation—floating subtitles onscreen next to the character speaking. (About one-third of the dialogue is in Hindi.) Overall, though, the combination of the teeming masses of India’s “maximum city” and Boyle’s zappow digital dynamics is exhausting.

Worse, the script is as on-the-nose as the dog comedy “*Marley and Me*.” Sadly, Boyle and screenwriter Simon Beaufoy didn’t trust their gimmick. “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” has been a hit around the world because its slow pacing (the opposite of “*Jeopardy!*”) allows viewers to think along with the contestant as he talks out his thought processes. Thinking is fun.

“*Crash*,” an equally contrived but more interactive film, allowed viewers a half minute to rewind the plot in their heads and figure out the climactic conundrum of why nobody was killed when the angry Iranian shot the Mexican locksmith’s angelic daughter at point-blank range.

Sadly, “*Slumdog Millionaire*” doesn’t encourage any thinking about earlier scenes. Instead, each quiz question is followed by a lengthy flashback ending with the answer. For example, after “Who invented the revolver?” comes Jamal’s recollection that concludes with his gangster brother waving a gun around and shouting, “The man with the Colt .45 says shut up!”

Okay, we get it. ■

Rated R for some violence, disturbing images and language.

BOOKS

[*The Reagan I Knew*, William F. Buckley Jr., Basic Books, 279 pages]

Getting Reagan Right

By Daniel McCarthy

THE CASUAL READER might be tempted to dismiss this book as an exercise in nostalgia. What could be more retro in 2009 than a memoir about Ronald Reagan—whose term in office expired 20 years ago—by William F. Buckley Jr., who founded *National Review* more than half a century back? All too many right-wingers still lead saprophyte-like lives in the shadows cast by these men. They recycle Buckley *mots* and sunny Reagan platitudes without ever knowing just when they turned into merchants of kitsch.

But those are the imitators. Buckley, on the other hand, was more mentally alive at 82—up to the moment he died at his desk last February working on the manuscript of this book—than his epigones are at 30. Proof of this is that *The Reagan I Knew* could just as fairly have been called *The Reagan I Didn't Know*, for after a 40-year friendship, Buckley suddenly realized he had misjudged the man. At *National Review's* 30th-anniversary gala in 1985, he toasted the then-president as the consummate cold warrior: "What I said in as many words, dressed up for the party, was that Reagan would, if he had to, pull the nuclear trigger," writes Buckley. "Twenty years after saying that, in the most exalted circumstance, in the presence of the man I was talking about, I changed my mind." Reagan would not have unleashed a nuclear holocaust, even in retaliation.

Buckley is by no means the first to underscore Reagan's absolute horror of

atomic warfare. The young scholar Paul Lettow in 2005 wrote *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*. But Buckley adds the authority of a participant to this revisionist enterprise, whose implications are profound. Conservatives look to Reagan as the embodiment of their beliefs. But if Reagan was not who he seemed to be, what becomes of conservatism? Was the 40th president a crypto-liberal—a spiritual descendant, as John Patrick Diggins has suggested, of Tom Paine and Ralph Waldo Emerson? Or is conservatism itself not what its adherents have long taken it to be?

Those are bigger questions than *The Reagan I Knew* can answer, and in any case Buckley is not trying to press a thesis with this book. Instead he has assembled a collage: material old and new from an array of sources, and whatever conclusions arise from this book come naturally and unbidden. About half of the volume consists of correspondence between Buckley, Ronald Reagan, and Nancy Reagan: there are rather more letters from Buckley to Nancy, in fact, than to her husband. Several chapters excerpt Reagan's appearances on Buckley's "Firing Line" program. Christopher Buckley and Danilo Petranovich, WFB's son and last research assistant respectively, contribute a foreword and introduction. Rounding out the package is an appendix of vintage Buckley articles about Reagan, spanning 1968 to 1991.

"This book is one in which the large scale of things is quite intentionally diminished or, better, maneuvered around," writes Buckley, "to make way for the cultivation of personal curiosity about someone who became a good friend." This serves to humanize a famously elusive leader. Buckley's Reagan is robust: when we (and Buckley) first meet him, he is about to introduce a Buckley talk at a Los Angeles high school. But the microphones are dead and can only be switched on from a locked booth above the auditorium.

"His diagnosis seemed instantaneous," Buckley recalls. "He was out the window, his feet on the parapet, his back

to the wall, sidestepping carefully toward the control-room window. Reaching it, he thrust his elbow, breaking the glass, and disappeared into the control room." In a moment, "we could hear the crackling of the newly animated microphone."

At their final encounter, in 1990, the ex-president again demonstrates his adventurous streak. He holds out his cup of tea to Buckley: "Stick your finger in this."

"What?"

"Yeah. Go ahead."

The drink is scalding. "Now, watch this," Reagan says as he swigs from the cup. "See? The tolerance of your mouth tissues is infinitely greater than that of your hand! ... You know who taught me that? It was Frank Sinatra."

Innocent mischief animates the exchanges between Buckley and both Reagans. In his letters to Nancy, Buckley jokes about eloping with her to Casablanca. With President Reagan, the running gag is that Buckley has been appointed secret ambassador to Afghanistan. (Speaking of ambassadors, we learn from a Dec. 30, 1980 Reagan letter that Buckley has urged him to send Russell Kirk to Great Britain. Unfortunately, Reagan replies that he cannot see "how anyone could hold that post at the Court of St. James's unless he was possessed of personal wealth.")

The Buckley and Reagan families do not see much of each other, yet are surprisingly close. Buckley encourages Reagan daughter Patti's efforts at poetry, finding in her work "sadnesses that were striking, and youthful melodrama, but also a pronouncedly live ear." He meditates between rebellious son and agitated parents one Thanksgiving when Ron Jr. decides to ditch Yale for ballet school. Thereafter "Ronald Reagan was as determined to subject his son to poverty as Ron Jr. was to live in it. Ron Jr. was entirely submissive in his sequestration—austerity was a part of his theatrical occupation."

The Reagan-Buckley friendship endured two sharp fractures over foreign policy. The first has become legendary. In

1978, Buckley and Reagan, two paladins of the American Right, arrayed themselves on opposing sides of the Panama Canal treaties being negotiated by the Carter Administration. Buckley, who favored turning the canal over to the Panamanians, invited Reagan, opposed, to debate him on "Firing Line." The knights had esquires: James Burnham, George Will, and Admiral Elmo Zumwalt stood with Buckley. Pat Buchanan, Roger Fontaine, and Admiral John McCain Jr., father of the senator, were with Reagan.

Back then, conservatives could disagree with one another about foreign policy openly and civilly. Reagan sounded notes familiar from recent debates over America's role in the Mideast: "I think we would cloak weakness in the suit of virtue" if America were to surrender the canal, he warned. "With this treaty, what do we do to ourselves in the eyes of the world, and to our allies? Will they, as Mr. Buckley says, see that as the magnanimous gesture of a great and powerful nation? ... I think the world would see it as, once again, Uncle Sam putting his tail between his legs and creeping away rather than face trouble."

Buckley's response would today get him branded an unpatriotic conservative. "We *do* negotiate under threats," he told Reagan. "Ninety-nine percent of all the negotiations that have gone on from the beginning of this world have gone on as a result of threats. ... The fact of the matter is that there are people in Panama who don't accept the notion of Governor Reagan about the undisputed, unambiguous sovereignty that the United States exercises over that territory." Likening Panamanian demands for sovereignty over the Canal Zone to the American Revolution, Buckley observed, "All of a sudden we find that we resent it when people say that they're willing to fight for *their* freedom."

"I profoundly disagree with the conclusion at which you have arrived," Buckley wrote to Reagan after the debate, "but I know that you credit my disagreement with you as sincere and thoughtful, and only wish I could say as much for some of your continuing fans,

and some of my erstwhile fans!" "Firing Line" continued, at least intermittently, to provide a forum in which conservatives could debate foreign policy. As late as October 1990, Buckley hosted a discussion between the antiwar Joseph Sobran and the interventionist Giles Lambertson on the justice of the then-impending first Gulf War.

But paradoxes abound. Buckley also helped introduce into the Right a new cadre of foreign-policy hard-liners who would be much less genteel than the host of "Firing Line." As early as 1974, WFB cautioned Reagan that his foreign-policy credentials were inadequate for a presidential contender, a fault that might be remedied by choosing the right advisors. "The best pool is the young men around Scoop Jackson," he urged—young men such as Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and others who would later be called neoconservatives.

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In the 1980s, the Right looked to President Reagan to wage the Cold War—and hot wars if necessary. But Buckley and his associates were not pleased with Reagan's second-term foreign policy, and this was the source of their second great disagreement. On May 22, 1987, *NR* ran a cover story on "Reagan's Suicide Pact," the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty with the Soviet Union. "I'm not a bit sure I am enthusiastic about your INF reductions," Buckley wrote in a letter to Reagan. This time there was no debate, and the roles were reversed. Reagan supported the treaty. He pursued other arms-control negotiations with the Soviets as well, in the teeth of conservative—and especially neoconservative—opposition. And the year he left office, the Berlin Wall fell.

The Reagan I Knew is a brief, breezy book, yet it succinctly conveys some of the complexities of both author and subject. That's where its strength lies: not in imposing an artificial uniformity on the

conservatism of Reagan and Buckley, but in showing—without morbidly dwelling upon—the sometimes fruitful contradictions and discontinuities in their thought. This makes *The Reagan I Knew* a surprisingly timely book.

Reagan was born in 1911, Buckley in 1923. Both rose to eminence in the 1950s and 1960s, at a time when the nation had only three television networks and nearly every adult male had served in the military. Mammoth corporations—AT&T, General Motors, General Electric—provided at least the promise of lifelong employment. The conservatism of that era was as monolithic as the rest of the culture. Libertarians and traditionalists had their differences, to be sure, but anti-Communism overawed both.

In the two decades since Reagan left office, however, American culture has fragmented. Three hundred cable and satellite channels have superseded the

three networks (which are now four or five), and 3 million YouTube clips may yet displace television. The 21st-century American pursues niche interests and changes jobs like he changes tires. Little wonder then that conservatism too has differentiated—into neocons, paleos, crunchy cons, theocons, localists, and a dozen other splinters. The Right has become as diffuse and granular as the wider culture. In a world like this, there will never be another Reagan or Buckley.

But that is no cause for mourning. Reagan's conservatism had its day, and Buckley believed that he had won his own wars. "There's nothing I hoped for that wasn't reasonably achieved," he told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2005, and now, without the Communist enemy, he said, "conservatism has become a little bit slothful." The challenge for the Right today is not to attempt to relive the glories of the past but to rethink them, as Buckley rethought Reagan. ■

[*The Man Who Owns the News: Inside the Secret World of Rupert Murdoch, Michael Wolff, Broadway, 464 pages*]

Murdoch Exposed

By Philip Weiss

RUPERT MURDOCH is a global action figure. The Australian talked foreign policy in the White House with John Kennedy when he was 30 years old. A decade later, he began making his way in New York media by buying the *New York Post* and championing future mayor Ed Koch. He has owned newspapers on four continents and pushed several wars in the Middle East, including the Iraq disaster. His role in the legendary dismissal of Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1976, when the left-winger opposed U.S. policy, has always been a mystery, right up there with Mossadegh and Pinochet.

Journalist Michael Wolff got hours of Murdoch's time to produce a portrait in *dishabille*. It turns out that, like other action figures, Murdoch doesn't have a lot to say. He's not reflective, he's inarticulate, and he has rarely read a book. He's unsocialized, underwhelming, and superstitious, the author reports. There's not much inner life and no psychology. He's "spectral." A finger-drummer.

He is amazingly hard working, however, from the moment he has his porridge—a "horse has to have its chaff," Murdoch says with charm. But that charm is limited. Murdoch is a net-worker, not a socializer, Wolff observes astutely. "Murdoch can seem rather out of it," he says. "That's partly the hearing issue, which no one acknowledges."

Wolff has made up for his subject's personality deficit with a dizzying feat of intimate storytelling. He narrates Murdoch's purchase of the *Wall Street Journal* from its old, resistant family owners in 2007 as a white-knuckler, throwing in a lot of entertaining side stories about Murdoch's

social progress. We read a great deal about Murdoch's three wives and six children and his several hair colors, too—gray, orange, aubergine. Brearley, the Manhattan private school he intrigued to get his daughter into, is in the index, while Iraq, the country he intrigued to get his adopted land to invade, doesn't show up. Murdoch's undershirt, or "singlet," is an essential device for Wolff. The comic climax of the tale is the consummation of Murdoch's relationship with wife number three, Wendi Deng, who is nearly 40 years his junior: "Let us pause for a moment to consider the first moment when Wendi sees the singlet come off."

The hard writerly chore of trying to imagine a soul where none may exist has pluses and minuses. On the plus side, Wolff is a shrewd and dazzling writer who has engaged in media ownership himself. He projects his own ego and values on to his inarticulate hero, and his book contains many excellent insights into how business works, how newspapers work, and how the New York elite works.

Take, for example, how Murdoch, seeking to leverage a daughter from Nightingale-Bamford school to Brearley, recruits lawyer/Clintonite/publicist Gary Ginsberg to help him get a letter from Caroline Kennedy, a Brearley

to play Murdoch: the likes of John Podhoretz, "a strange, abrasive, Asperger's type" and the late Eric Breindel, who died in 1998, Wolff says, of AIDS.

Wolff's observations on newspaper culture are also prizes. He loves Murdoch because he is a great troublemaker of the English tabloid tradition. Murdoch is "not a modern journalist but the last representative from an era when a newspaper was its own advertisement, when it had to sell itself." But the American newspaper serves a different function. It was an aspirational tool for its middle-class readers: "A newspaper's best strategy was to be sedate, mannerly, uncontroversial—to offend no one, and not to call attention to the fact that it has monopolized the market..."

The culture got worse when, in the aftermath of Watergate, the news business began to explode and journalism, in Wolff's delectable phrase, became a "profession of choice ... the newsgathering function was overtaken by the information-processing one—more specialized skill sets were required..." News was now serious, joyless, robbed of personality.

In the novel that Wolff makes of Murdoch's life, the hero is no worse than the rest. The real reason he wants to buy the *Wall Street Journal* is not to suck the

THE JOURNAL IS MEANT TO BE A CULTURAL COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE PROPERTY THAT MAKES MURDOCH A LOT OF MONEY BUT HE CAN'T ABIDE: FOX NEWS.

alumna and board member, on the girl's behalf. And we learn that when the legendary publicist Howard Rubenstein wants to show his power in the newsroom, he takes a long walk with "client in tow" right through it, toward the owner's office.

Murdoch now has designs, Wolff asserts, on the *New York Times*, whose publisher Arthur Sulzberger "wants to be some New Age media mogul; Rupert wants to be a newspaper proprietor." Not that Murdoch is always sharp. His *New York Post* loses nearly \$50 million a year and employs ideologues who know how

music out of it, as he seems to have done with the *Times* of London, but to please his "liberal-ish" wife, Wendi, who revels in media celebrity and packs her unglamorous husband into Prada suits. The *Journal* is meant to be a cultural counterweight to the property that makes Murdoch a lot of money but he can't abide: Fox News, led by his "monster," Roger Ailes, and someone else Murdoch "despises," the "bullying, mean-spirited" Bill O'Reilly.

And so, after 400 pages, Murdoch, whom Wolff unconvincingly styles as an outsider in an effort to jazz the reader's

interest, has become the Obama-loving blue-state insider.

Can the reader hang in that long, even with the pleasure of Wolff's headlong comical prose? Put another way, as Wolff asked in his most famous moment in journalism when, at the start of the Iraq War, he boldly took on a general at the sterile media center in Qatar: "What's the value proposition? What's the value of what we're learning at this million-dollar press center?" I'd say that this story is not a value proposition for two reasons, political and social.

Wolff reminds his readers that the business story is the great drama of recent journalism. The journalism of the journalism business is business. But timing has been unkind to Wolff. His book comes out as readers are beginning to wonder how many of the heroic tales of capitalism we have been fed over the last 20 years have been, well, underwritten by suck-ups to the heroes themselves. Quite a bit, to judge from Wolff's own reports.

Had the author anticipated this shift in the zeitgeist and expressed some dyspep-

sia about globalism and growth for growth's sake and the puffery that surrounds it, he might have escaped some of the damage of the financial meltdown. But Wolff loves deals and deal-makers. It's worth repeating that he says nothing about the disaster that Murdoch helped underwrite, the Iraq War. He takes numerous jabs, meanwhile, at anybody who vaguely questions political authority. The Whitlam affair is brushed off. One of Murdoch's sons is dispatched as a "tree-hugger." An owner of the *Wall Street Journal* lives in Burlington Vermont, an "alternative-lifestyle capital," Wolff says with New York provincialism, where she runs (start the irony drip) a "sustainable and socially conscious redevelopment company." The *Village Voice* is a "leftwing insane asylum." (What, then, is the *New York Post*, haven to vicious drunken jingoists and losing a million a week?) Wolff repeatedly derides the *WSJ*'s old family as "proudly remote from commerce"—left-leaning, entitled, elitist.

It's one thing to have values, it's another to be so assumptive about them. It does not help that Wolff's acknowledgments, which precede his story, end with a fulsome paean to Claridge's, Wolff's favorite hotel in London, which I would quote but for the fact that I'd have to read it a second time.

The same provincialism inhabits Wolff's social values. The New York world that Rupert Murdoch makes his progress in is a Jewish one. At times almost all his acolytes and henchmen and lawyers and bankers seem to be Jewish. Many of these close associates, Irwin Stelzer, Breindel, Howard Rubenstein, are Zionists and neoconservatives. I don't remember either word appearing in this book—though "neoconish" does.

Wolff is of that world, and that's fine. He savors acumen, the love of the deal, globalism, prestige, image-making. The shadow hero of the book would seem to be its main unspoken source, Matthew Freud, great-grandson of you-know-who, a publicist married to a Murdoch daughter and a media/publicity necromancer in the mold of Wolff himself.

"Freud too has been a factor in this book," Wolff says opaquely, about the time he and the reader are tiring of its subject.

The problem for a reader who wants to understand the ways of the new establishment is that Wolff cannot step outside that culture for even a minute to explain it. Meanwhile, he takes endless shots at WASPs. He must use that word a dozen times, and it is always a put-down for crusty entitlement, if not clubby anti-Semitism. Wolff angrily rebukes an allegedly anti-Semitic writer who frowned on Stelzer for not storing wine properly. He fails to point out, meanwhile, that Stelzer is another neocon working at the Hudson Institute, a co-author of the Iraq War.

I wish Wolff could have been even a fraction as wiseass about Jews as he is about Protestants. WASP culture, he says smartly, "capitulated. Just sat down and refused to go on." It was "patrician, remote and snobbish." OK. And what about the culture that replaced it? How essential is a love of Israel to Murdoch's new set? What does it signify that, of Murdoch's brood, Wolff has the greatest disdain for son James, the treehugger, who goes off on Zionists in an audience with his father and Tony Blair (a story culled from someone else's book)? When father Murdoch attacks the Palestinians, James says he's "Talking f-----g nonsense. ... They were kicked out of their f-----g homes and had nowhere to f-----g live." Wolff characterizes James as "aggressive," "intense," "judgmental."

It is Wolff's fine achievement that we see how Rupert Murdoch's politics are not well thought through. They are ready-made, instinctual and handy, pragmatic. If you are a suck-up with a simple argument, Wolff notes with savage insight, you can get far with the publisher. Murdoch goes with the spirit of the times—and may adjust better to the new one than his biographer. ■

Philip Weiss is at work on a book about the American army in Australia in 1943. He blogs at www.philipweiss.org/mondoweiss/.

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[*Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America*, Thomas L. Friedman, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 448 pages]

Globalist Meltdown

By Pat Choate

RACHEL CARSON received a letter in 1958 from a friend in Massachusetts describing the destruction of birdlife on Cape Cod caused by DDT spraying. Carson, a marine biologist and nature author, unsuccessfully tried to interest several magazines in an article about the dangers posed by the world's most powerful pesticide. Undeterred, she spent the next four years writing *Silent Spring*, which *The New Yorker* serialized in June 1962. It instantly became a worldwide bestseller.

The use of DDT was eventually banned in the United States and many other nations. As the Natural Resources Defense Council now notes, however, the book's strongest legacy was not that ban but the cultivation of "a public awareness that nature was vulnerable to human intervention." The dangers Carson outlined—contamination of the food chain, cancer, genetic damage, the loss of entire species—were so frightening that they made acceptable the notion of regulating industry. Environmentalism was born.

Fifty years later, Thomas Friedman in *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* sounds a similar alarm about the dangerous convergence of global warming, rising population growth, and economic globalization. The resulting brew, he argues, threatens world stability and even life itself. His solution is a massive global shift from dirty carbon fuels to clean energy and conservation. The shift would require innovation on a historic scale. Friedman envisions that the task can provide the basis for the renewal of the American spirit and economy, if U.S. leaders accept the challenge.

Friedman's description of "crowding" is nothing less than a neo-Malthusian portrayal of a rapidly growing world population that is overstretching its resources. Between 2008 and 2050, the United Nations projects, the world's population will grow from 6.7 billion people to more than 9.2 billion. Put into context, this is roughly equal to adding two Chinas to the world's population over the next four decades.

As the people of these countries struggle to find shelter and food, they are destroying forests and wetlands, converting arable land into urban slums, overfishing their streams, lakes, and oceans, even as they drain their available water supplies. Entire species of flora and fauna are disappearing as parts of the earth die.

Friedman notes that China, India, and a handful of other nations are creating a middle class that aspires to follow the lifestyles of Americans, Europeans, and the Japanese. Satisfying the needs of unfettered economic globalization creates demands for resources of all kinds, and the related production relies on dirty fuels—oil, coal, and natural gas. The current world economic crisis may reduce those demands in the short term, yet in the longer term they are sure to expand.

A world of growing need for goods and food, coupled with the corresponding rise in production that relies on carbon fuels, is releasing rising amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, where it remains for thousands of years. This Friedman calls hot. In turn, these gases are changing the heat balance between earth and the sun and are putting at risk the habitat of every creation on earth.

The problem, according to Friedman, is that the existing global dependence on coal, oil, and natural gas cannot be sustained. While large reserves of each exist, to continue our trust in them would be a form of long-term collective suicide. A clean, green alternative is required.

Despite the growing obviousness of the need for what Friedman terms "Code Green," dreadful obstacles exist. The global "petrodicatorship" is one.

Carbon-producing nations are the beneficiaries of a massive transfer of wealth that exceeds trillions of dollars annually. Those nations need only tap what is beneath their land to collect the riches of the world. This largest of all cartels has every incentive to cut production and raise prices while alternative energy sources are undeveloped and to raise production and lower prices whenever they need to stifle any innovation.

Another barrier is the existing investment in a carbon-based energy system. Imagine that some genius was to have a eureka moment and invent an abundant, cheap, clean, reliable, and safe energy source. The principal opponents to implementing this technology would be the existing energy providers—much as Edison tried to block Tesla's introduction of alternating-current electricity in the 19th century. Friedman quotes a historical fact attested to by Royal Dutch Shell: "Typically it has taken 25 years after commercial introduction for a primary energy form to get a one percent share of the global market." If change of the size and speed now required is to happen, says Friedman, then the world must take unusually aggressive approaches to bring about that progress faster.

The preferred path for developing a global clean-energy system, he writes, is to optimize simultaneously three elements: the generation of the cleanest electrons, efficient use of that energy, and conservation.

Yet the production of electricity in this nation is divided among 3,200 separate utilities, many of them operating under multiple regulatory authorities with an outdated grid system. Texas entrepreneur T. Boone Pickens's multibillion dollar investment to generate electricity with wind systems highlights the problem. His machines are located in the High Plains of Texas and Oklahoma, which contain a major wind corridor. While he can generate massive amounts of electricity, there is no major grid to carry the power to the rest of the nation.

"How do we move forward?" Friedman asks. First, he suggests, we need a goal. He proposes that the world should aim to

avoid a doubling of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere by 2050. This target, he explains, could be met if the world were to accomplish 15 specific actions. One is to double the fuel efficiency of two billion automobiles. Another is to double today's nuclear power generation to replace coal-produced electricity. A third is to replace 1,400 large coal-fired electric plants with natural-gas powered facilities. A fourth is to increase today's wind-power generation by 40 times. A fifth is to halt the entire cutting and burning of forests. A sixth is to cut electricity use in homes, offices, and stores by 25 percent and cut carbon omissions by the same amount. The list of Herculean challenges continues.

Friedman correctly observes that a miracle would be required for the world to meet even one of these goals because they demand radical changes in our everyday lives. Are you prepared to live in a world in which governments set the weight, speed, and engine size of automobiles; ration electricity on a monthly per capita basis; or impose taxes on fossil fuels to make gasoline cost at least \$9 per gallon?

His solution is innovation on a massive scale, which is most likely to come not from some massive Manhattan-type project but from thousands of innovators working to satisfy a market demand for reliable, green, inexpensive solutions.

Friedman argues for "the right" mix of taxes, regulations, incentives, and disincentives to create and stabilize that market. In effect, he calls for a global green industrial policy, led by the United States.

Hot, Flat, and Crowded makes a convincing case for its proposed Code Green. Nonetheless, the book also has a major omission, as well as an ideological trap.

Friedman ignores the importance of U.S. and global patent policies. The market-based approach he advocates relies on tens of thousands of innovators taking their creations to market, where their investments can be returned and multiplied. Strong and efficient patent-protection systems are essential in this process. Alexander Graham Bell filed

his patent on the telephone on Feb. 14, 1876. The Patent Office issued patent number 174,465 on March 7, 1876—21 days later. Later, the Bell patent withstood 600 lawsuits, five of which went to the Supreme Court.

Today, however, the average patent processing time is almost 33 months. For advanced innovations, such as green technologies, it can take five years. The Patent Office warehouses in Northern Virginia now contain almost one million unprocessed applications. Put into perspective, a patent application on a complex technology that could shift the world from dirty to clean technologies filed on Jan. 20, 2009 is unlikely to be issued before the spring of 2013. The Patent Office has become the principal bottleneck to the rapid deployment of U.S. innovation.

Equally troublesome, a group of giant corporations is trying to weaken the U.S. patent system today, just as Wall Street weakened U.S. financial regulations during the Clinton and Bush administrations. The greatest threat these giants face is from some lone inventor or small company creating a breakthrough technology that makes their investments outdated. The corporations leading the lobbying are Apple, Cisco, Dell, HP, Intel, Micron, Oracle, and Microsoft, all of which were once startups in someone's garage challenging the giants. Now they are the establishment.

Investors in green research and development require the means to recoup their investment. A strong patent provides that, while sharing knowledge with the public. Simply put, the massive innovation required for Friedman's Code Green will be impossible if U.S. patent laws and protections are weakened to the point of meaninglessness.

The ideological, and more distressing, flaw with *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* is Friedman's monomaniacal devotion to unregulated globalism, which he mistakenly labels "free trade." A true free-trade agreement would be a one-sentence document that reads, "There will be no barriers to the sale and movement of goods and services between the United

States and the nation of X." The 1,000-page plus documents that Friedman and others call free-trade agreements are actually compendiums of first, second, third, and lesser choices or bargains. They are managed-trade arrangements.

Where trade is involved, facts apparently do not matter to Friedman. In a 2006 interview on CNBC with Tim Russert, Friedman said that he had recently given a speech in Minnesota and a man had stood up and asked, "Mr. Friedman, is there any free-trade agreement you'd oppose?" "No, absolutely not," I said. "You know what, sir? I wrote a column supporting the CAFTA, the Caribbean Free Trade Initiative. I didn't even know what was in it. I just knew two words: free trade."

Had Friedman taken the time to study the many free-trade agreements he has endorsed in books, columns, and speeches, he would have learned that, despite intense opposition from environmental groups, the Clinton and Bush administrations refused to include environmental provisions in these trade pacts, beginning with NAFTA.

Imagine how much greener the world would be if the U.S. had required that Mexico, China, India, and dozens of other nations adopt and monitor environmental codes to bring their standards up to ours. Were we serious about the environment, the flow of imports from those nations would be based on some formula for environmental improvement. Instead, dozens of other countries operate as dirty fuel, water, and air sanctuaries from which both their domestic producers and runaway transnational corporations can produce, pollute, and export with impunity.

Despite these flaws and the author's irritating style—this book is really a long op-ed and Friedman has an unpleasant habit of name dropping—*Hot, Flat, and Crowded* is a landmark work with the potential to do for dirty fuels what *Silent Spring* did for dangerous pesticides. ■

Pat Choate is director of the Manufacturing Policy Project. His most recent book is Dangerous Business: The Risks of Globalization for America.

League of Our Own

If it's January, the Buffalo Bills must be scattered to the greens of 50 golf courses, far from the howling winds and abundant snows of their autumnal "home." Only

one Bill, backup linebacker Jon Corto, is native to the region. The remainder are about as Buffalonian as Caroline Kennedy.

The localist solution is a territorial draft. The Bills would be of Buffalo and not just mesomorphic mercenaries. Of course this would lead to an NFL based in California, Texas, and Florida, with western New York kicked into a minor league. That's okay. Majors have cash but minors have soul.

Far removed from the glory days of four consecutive Super Bowl appearances in the early 1990s, the Bills' only recent distinction came from the Sunday morning boosting of my old boss Tim Russert of South Buffalo. I remember Tim before he was a saint, when he was a hail-fellow political operative picking off Pat Moynihan's hapless Republican would-be challengers with all the zest of a giddy teenager zapping aliens in a video game. I'll bet ex-Bills QB Jack Kemp was more afraid of Russert than he ever was of Buck Buchanan.

While the Bills skidded to another sub-.500 record this season, I contented myself with Larry Felser's *The Birth of the New NFL: How the 1966 NFL/AFL Merger Transformed Pro Football*. Felser was present at the creation, covering the formation of the American Football League in 1960 for the *Buffalo Courier-Express*, though I suppose his greatest distinction came in marrying Beverly, who defeated my mother in the Elba Onion Queen pageant of 1957. I don't know if mom has forgiven her yet.

Those beautiful old AFL names—Houston Antwine, Gloster Richardson, Cookie Gilchrist—evoke the dawn of my football consciousness in that antediluvian age of the tie game, the straight-ahead kicker, and the white cornerback. Felser was there and he took notes. The AFL was a spirited underdog but it was no pastoral dream: the San Diego, née Los Angeles, Chargers were named after owner Barron Hilton's hotel chain's credit-card operation. What a loathsome derivation!

But consider Felser's take on the cartoonish villain Al Davis, owner of the Oakland Raiders. Davis, as commissioner of the AFL, hired ex-*Buffalo Evening News* sportswriter Jack Horrigan as his PR man. When Horrigan was diagnosed with leukemia, writes Felser, "Davis, a Jew, bought a votive candle in a Catholic religious supply store. Back in his office, he lit the candle as a devotion, a prayer in flame—a Catholic custom. When the office was about to close that evening, a cleaning lady informed him it was against building policy to leave a burning candle unattended. Davis took off his coat and stayed the night."

That doesn't make up for yanking the team out of Oakland for 13 years, but Al can't be all bad.

Pro football today is nigh unwatchable due to the chronic TV timeouts that interrupt the flow of the game and remind the assembled just who is boss. After scores or changes of possession, the 22 behemoths on the field wait meekly for a spindly TV semaphorist to

give the referees the signal to resume play. What would happen if the players defied the Great God Television and just started playing? There would be consequences, I imagine.

Mauling women, popping loudmouths in bars, shooting steroids: these things the mansters of the gridiron will do, but disobey television—never.

The major-college game is just as compromised, though the exigencies of recruiting give most teams a regional accent. My football preferences are outré: I am a Catholic peacenik whose favorite teams were Brigham Young and Army before the University of Buffalo Bulls staggered into Division I in 1999. UB had the worst program in college football until Turner Gill, a devout Christian gentleman and miracle worker, came to town three years ago. Gill vitalized the team with local products James Starks of Niagara Falls and Buffalo's own Naaman Roosevelt, so that the Bulls of Buffalo are, in some sense, representative of Buffalo. This year UB played in a postseason game for the first time ever—the unfortunately named International Bowl in Toronto.

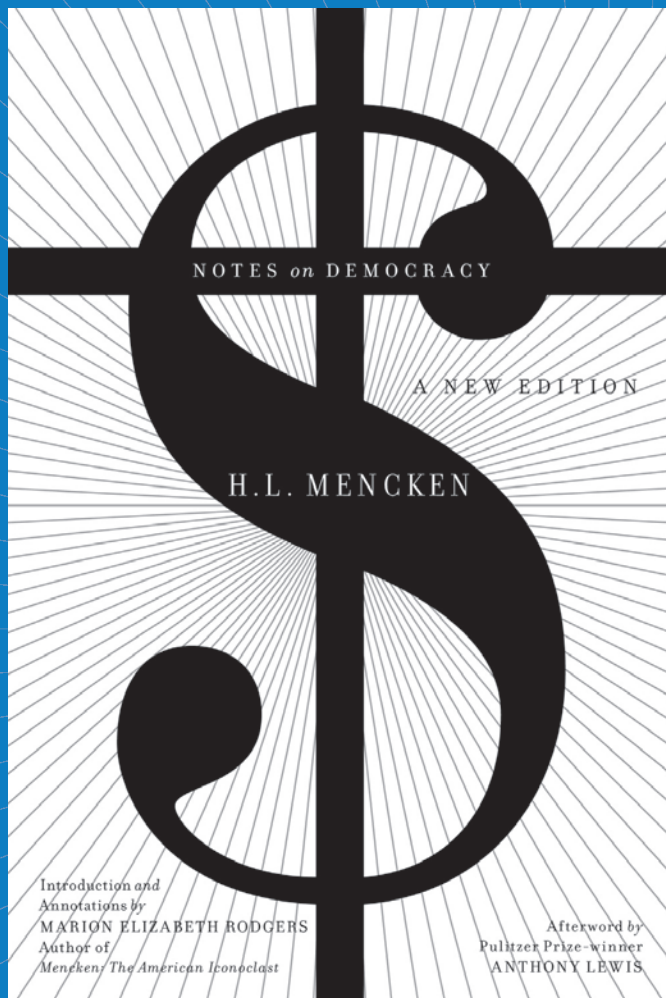
Bulls fans expected a bittersweet end: Gill would leave town at season's conclusion, lured by a fat contract from a football factory. No one—well, almost no one—would have blamed him. In America, people are expected to move for money. Loyalty is penury. Immobility is for suckers and losers.

But Turner Gill is staying. Passed over for the Auburn job—reportedly for the stupid racist reason that the coach, who is black, has a white wife—Gill is casting down his bucket where he is, at least for now.

Stay is such an underrated word. ■

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